



The Beacon

Behind the scenes at the City of Beaufort



INSIDE:



Hurricane Season starts soon! What you need to know

Spring/Summer 2024



The Beacon

Spring/Summer 2024

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What drew you to public service and led you to run for City Council?

Mayor Phil Cromer

Elected as mayor in 2023; previously served on City Council from 2014 to 2022



I was drawn to public service because of belief in service above self and felt an obligation or duty to give back to my community that has meant so much to me and my family. As a member of council, I want to ensure that City government understands the needs and interests of all residents, is a good steward of resources, and works to improve the quality of life for all who live and work in Beaufort.

Mayor Pro Tem Mike McFee

Elected in 2008 to City Council



I had been involved with the City on commissions and as president of the Chamber. I felt I was in a position with job flexibility that I wanted to contribute to public service. My great-uncles had both been administrators, one for the City the other for the County, and I had always heard their pros and cons about their positions and their councils from the staff side. Timing was right and I pledged NOT to become one of 'those' council members I had heard from my great-uncles!

Councilman Neil Lipsitz

Elected to City Council in 2020



Being retired, and having lived in Beaufort my entire life, I was serving from 2015 to 2020 on the South Carolina Board of Nursing, appointed by the governor. I wanted to do more for my beloved hometown and saw that two seats were open on City Council. Not being happy with certain projects, I wanted to be a part of the solutions instead of the problems. Serving the citizens of the City of Beaufort has been a truly rewarding privilege.

Councilman Mitch Mitchell

Elected to City Council in 2020



It was my desire to serve the citizens of our City that drew me to public service. It was my desire to be a more effective public servant, along with the persuasive convincing of some of my most ardent supporters, that led to the launching of my successful 2020 campaign for City Council. It gives me great satisfaction that the citizens of our city have entrusted me to make decisions that are in their best interest. It is a trust that I take most seriously and one that I shall do my very best to serve our City's collective interest.

Councilman Josh Scallate

Elected to City Council in 2022



Having worked with the Fire Department for a decade, I have witnessed firsthand the impact that public service can have on our community. Furthermore, being involved in shaping the future of my hometown has been a deeply fulfilling experience. I find great joy in contributing toward the betterment of our community and ensuring its growth and prosperity. Thank you for providing me the privilege to share my reasoning. I look forward to the continued opportunity to serve our City and make a positive difference.



City Council will adopt new rules on public comment, and when it is allowed during meetings.

Expect to see changes in City Council procedures

Changes are likely to be coming to City Council meetings beginning July 1 of this year, pending City Council approval.

City Manager Scott Marshall has proposed a series of changes in a previous work session that will reduce the number of meetings, and also help to streamline the meetings. Pending Council's formal approval of a new operations and procedures manual, and an ordinance amendment, the following will be implemented:

Regular Meetings

Council will meet on the first Tuesday of every month. It currently meets on the second and fourth Tuesdays of each month.

Work Sessions

Council will continue to hold a Work Session every month to review changes to the Beaufort Code, until that work is completed. Once a quarter, a Work Session will be devoted to reviewing capital projects. Additional Work Sessions will be added on an as-needed basis. Currently, Work Sessions are held before each Regular Meeting, plus the Beaufort Code Work Session.

Public Comment

Two public comments sessions will be allowed during the Regular Meeting. One will be held at the beginning, and will be limited to agenda items. One will be held near the end of the meeting, and any topic can be brought up. Currently, Council allows public comment at the beginning of each meeting on any topic not on the agenda. It also allows comment on each agenda item as the meeting proceeds. Public comment will be limited to 5 minutes per speaker.

Consent Agenda

Routine items, especially ones that are repeated each year (requests to sponsor events, allow special parking for events, etc.) will be bundled at the front of the agenda as the consent agenda, and then approved with a single vote. However, a member of City Council can request that an item be moved from the consent agenda to the regular agenda.

These changes reflect common practices of many cities in South Carolina and elsewhere.

Planning retreat helps city officials line up projects

In late January, the City of Beaufort held a two-day strategic planning retreat, attended by the mayor and City Council, the city manager, and department heads. Public comment was welcome during both days.

Council directed City Manager Scott Marshall and staff to fund during Fiscal Year 2024 these emerging capital projects:

- Duke Street Drainage and Streetscape Engineering
- Playground equipment upgrades at Pigeon Point Park
- 1st SC Volunteers of African Descent Memorial Park Concept and Master Plan
- Battery Shores Drainage Project engineering
- Pigeon Point Boat Landing design and engineering
- Spanish Moss Trail Sidewalk Extension on North Street
- Consulting services for restoration of Arsenal walls
- 500 Carteret window replacement and stucco repair

Electric transmission lines set to receive upgrades this year

Dominion Energy is ramping up to rebuild the 115 kV electric transmission line from the Burton Substation to the Frogmore Substation.

Why is this being done? The existing transmission line, in service for decades, needs a full rebuild. The project spans 6 miles, using the existing right of way. The 115 kV wooden poles will be replaced with galvanized steel structures, designed for modern electric codes to enhance reliability and resilience.

Potential impacts: Dominion recognizes the potential impact on the Spanish Moss Trail and certain roads due to this project. However, the goal is to provide better, safer, and more reliable energy for our community.

Dominion hopes to start by the end of May. The City of Beaufort will work with Dominion to provide updates on this project.

Questions? Call 1-866-865-1466



Construction on Phase 1 is ongoing at Southside Park.

Progress report on Beaufort's capital projects

Southside Park:

The groundbreaking for Southside Park was held on Feb. 26, and construction on Phase 1 began immediately after. Phase 1 includes a woodland playground (with equipment appropriate for very young and older children), an event pavilion and new vehicular access and parking lot improvements. Phase 1 is expected to be completed this fall.

Washington Street Park:

The Washington Street Park Master Plan was presented to City Council in March. It features a performance pavilion, a basketball half-court, a tennis practice court, a rain garden, new landscaping and benches, two murals, and a historic marker. Construction is scheduled to begin in late May and be completed by the end of the year.

King Street Project:

The King Street project consists of a collection and conveyance system, a pump station with a backup generator, and an updated outfall. Civil engineer-

ing firm Davis & Floyd has completed all the data collection and survey work. Thirty percent of the design has been completed and has been undergoing review this spring. Informational meetings with the public were held in April and May. The next step will be to continue designing the plans and specifications to the 60% mark, at which point another regulatory review and approval is required.

Bayard Street Project:

Bayard Street project includes replacing a collapsed pipe and updating the outfall. Survey and data collection is completed to support the design, which is 30% complete. The City is initiating conversations with the homeowners to share the conceptual plan. An informational meeting in April was held with the public.

Charles Craven and Carteret and Port Republic:

The Charles Craven and Carteret and Port Republic project includes new drainage infrastructure. Civil engineer-

ing firm McCormick Taylor has completed the data collection and survey work to support the design, which is 60% complete. An informational meeting with the public was held in April.

Allison Road:

The Allison Road project is a streetscape project that includes a sidewalk, stormwater drainage, and underground utilities. The project was bid in early January and the City awarded the contract to Gulf Stream. Construction began in early May and is expected to be completed in the fall. The City will keep the public updated on this project's progress.

Calhoun Street:

The Calhoun Street project design is complete and all permits to initiate the project have been secured. The City is still acquiring the rights-of-way on this project. Once these rights-of-way are secure and the S.C. Commerce Department approves the project, it can begin. Construction is expected to take 180 days.



Members of the Planning Commission include, from left, Vice Chair Mike Tomy, Bill Suter, Secretary Kimberly McFann, Paul Trask, Bill Bardenwerper, and Chairman Benjie Morillo. Not pictured is member Clinton Hallman.

New Planning Commission has gotten off to strong start

The establishment of a Planning Commission to review new projects solely in the City of Beaufort represents a major change in how the City conducts its review procedures.

Previously, the City was part of the Metropolitan Planning Commission, which reviewed projects in Beaufort, the Town of Port Royal, and occasionally Beaufort County. In 2023, City Council determined that it would be more effective for the City to have its own Planning Commission, which would also absorb the responsibilities of the Design Review Board.

By the end of the year, the Design Review Board had been abolished, the Planning Commission created, and applications for the seven-member board were being reviewed. In February 2024, the new Planning Commission convened and it has been meeting regularly since. (Note, the Planning Commission does not review projects in the Historic Landmark District. The Historic District Review Board is responsible for that oversight.)

Members of the Planning Commission must immerse themselves in the Beaufort Development Code, and don't have to worry about the other jurisdictions.

Planning Commission Chairman Benjie Morillo says the structure of the Plan-

ning Commission makes it “easier for everyone involved in reviewing the large development projects coming into the city.

“It’s easier for all entities (City, review body, and applicant) because the zoning, building, street sections and connections, surrounding buildings, and natural ecology are all important to be reviewed by a single review board,” Morillo said. “There will be no issues of one board approving one thing and the other denying the same thing.

“I see the PC, along with the City Planning Department, to be the entity to guide the development of a sustainable and resilient City that cares greatly about preserving its surrounding natural ecology,” Morillo said.

Community Development Director Curt Freese, whose Planning division works closely with the Planning Commission, is happy with the progress he has seen.

“The new Planning Commission is off to a strong start and has begun an in-depth review of the Beaufort Code edit changes sent to it for recommendation by City Council,” he said. “This Planning Commission brings a wealth of expertise to assist the City with development, with three attorneys, two licensed architects, an engineer, and a real estate expert making up its membership.”

What specifically does the Planning Commission do?

The Planning Commission has the following responsibilities and discretionary authorities:

- Review and approve, approve with conditions, or deny all major subdivision sketch plans.
- Review and make recommendations to the City Council regarding amendments to the text of the Beaufort Development Code.
- Review and make recommendations to the City Council regarding amendments to the official zoning map.
- Review and make recommendations to the City Council regarding amendments to the Comprehensive Plan.
- Review and approve, approve with conditions, or deny major site and delegate to City Staff all other site plan approvals not stated in Section 9.8.2 of the Beaufort Development Code.
- Delegate preliminary plat, and final subdivision plat review and approval to City Staff.
- Review and make recommendations to City Council regarding proposed annexations into the City.
- Consider the Northern Beaufort County Regional Plan and Growth Area in any review and approval as defined.

Members of the Planning Commission

- Benjie Morillo, Chairman
- Mike Tomy, Vice Chair
- Kimberly McFann, Secretary
- Bill Bardenwerper
- Clinton Hallman
- Bill Suter
- Paul Trask

Don't wait to make preparations for hurricanes

The Atlantic Hurricane Season officially begins June 1. Are you ready?

Even if you consider yourself a veteran of bad storms and hurricanes, it's important to take Hurricane Season seriously and make sure you are prepared. The advice you'll find on these next pages is straight from the Federal Emergency Management Agency and the South Carolina Emergency Management Division – the experts!

Make an emergency plan

Make sure everyone in your household knows and understands your hurricane plans. Include the office, kids' day care, and anywhere else you frequent in your hurricane plans. Ensure your business has a continuity plan to continue operating when disaster strikes.

Know your evacuation zone

You may have to evacuate quickly due to a hurricane if you live in an evacuation zone. Learn your evacuation routes in Beaufort County, practice with your household and pets, and identify where you will stay.

Follow the instructions from local emergency managers, who work closely with state, local, tribal, and territorial agencies and partners. They will provide the latest recommendations based on the threat to your community and appropriate safety measures.

Recognize warnings and alerts

Have several ways to receive alerts. Download the FEMA app and receive real-time alerts from the National

Build A Kit

Have enough food, water and other supplies to support your needs for several days.



Weather Service for up to five locations nationwide. Sign up for community alerts in your area and be aware of the Emergency Alert System (EAS) and Wireless Emergency Alert (WEA), which require no sign up.

Those with disabilities

Identify if you may need additional help during an emergency if you or anyone else in your household is an individual with a disability.

Review important documents

Make sure your insurance policies and personal documents, such as ID, are up to date. Make copies and keep them in a secure password-protected digital space.

Strengthen your home

De-clutter drains and gutters, bring in

outside furniture, and consider hurricane shutters.

Get tech ready

Keep your cell phone charged when you know a hurricane is in the forecast and purchase backup charging devices to power electronics.

Help your neighborhood

Check with neighbors, senior adults, or those who may need additional help securing hurricane plans to see how you can be of assistance to others

Gather supplies

Have enough supplies for your household, include medication, disinfectant supplies and pet supplies in your go bag or car trunk. You may not have access to these supplies for days or even weeks after a hurricane.

Download the FEMA App to get alerts and warnings.



#HurricanePrep

Ready 

TALK WITH YOUR NEIGHBORS and get involved in your community.



Ready  FEMA 

READY.GOV/VOLUNTEER

Who handles hurricane response in our county?

The Beaufort County's Sheriff's Office is the lead coordinating agency in Beaufort County, and it manages the Beaufort County Emergency Operations Center.

During emergencies the Sheriff's Office coordinates all response activities countywide through the Beaufort County Emergency Operations Center (EOC). The County EOC is staffed by representatives from all municipalities and military bases in the county and the Beaufort County School District, as well as experts in critical support fields.

The City of Beaufort follows the directives of Beaufort County Emergency Management during a hurricane or critical incident. The City activates its own EOC, within the Police Department, and its representatives are available to assist you with information during such an event.

Nixle alerts

If you have not done this, sign up for the Sheriff's Office Nixle alerts, which will issue relevant alerts before, during and after a hurricane.

SHERIFF'S OFFICE
NIXLE ALERTS

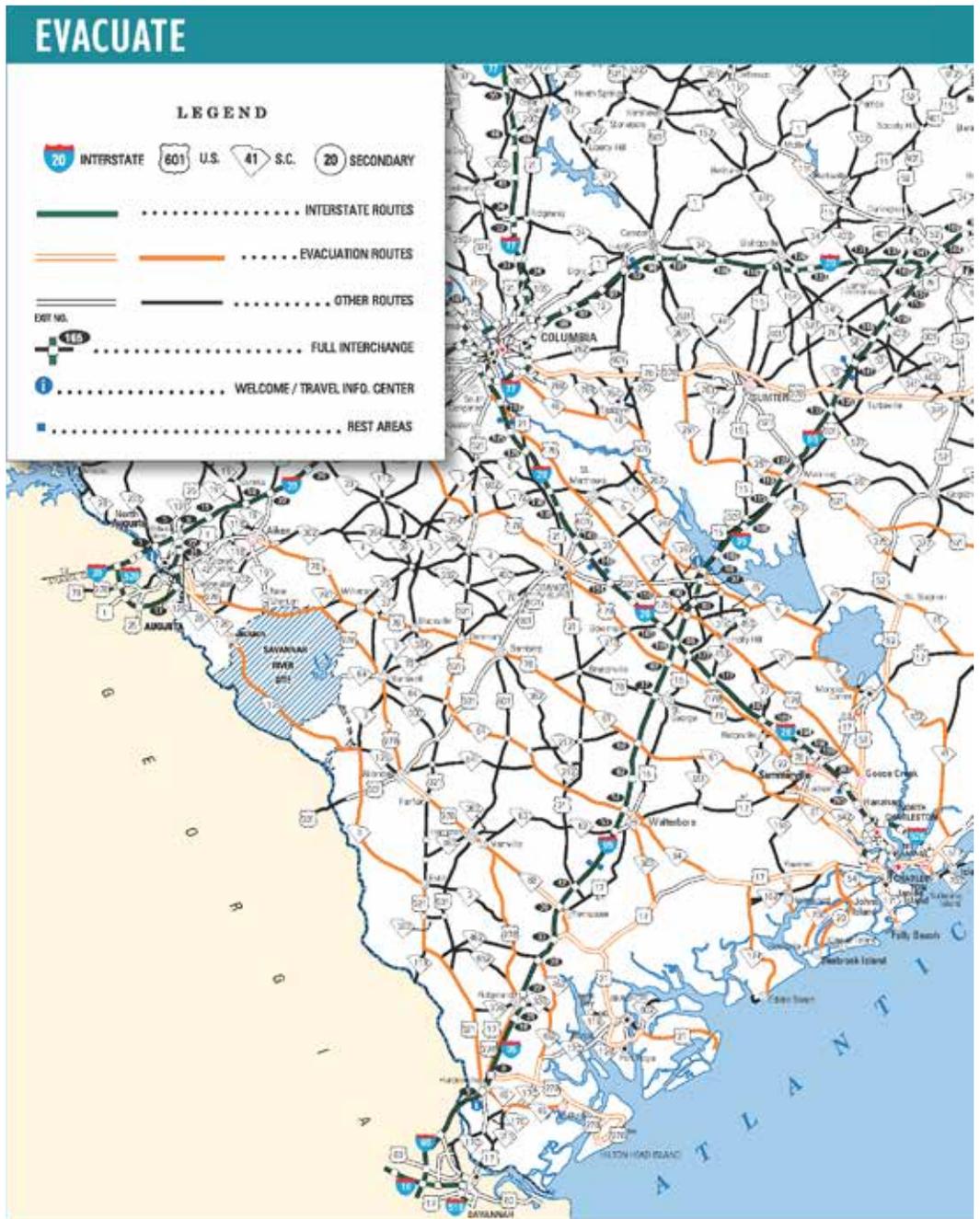


CITY OF BEAUFORT
NIXLE ALERTS



Social media

The City of Beaufort will update its Facebook and Nextdoor pages with reliable information before, during and after a hurricane.



Evacuation from the City of Beaufort

All of Beaufort County is **Zone A Southern Coast** for evacuation purposes.

Two-lane evacuation

Evacuees will use the two present northbound lanes on US 21 to US 17. Upon reaching US 17, the right lane will be directed to US 17 north to SC 303 to Walterboro. The left lane will be directed to US 17 south, then to US 17 Alt / US 21 to Yemassee and then ultimately to North Augusta.

Three-lane evacuation

Under certain conditions, a third northbound lane will be formed by reversing flow in the inside southbound lane of US 21 at US 21 Business west of Beaufort, accommodating traffic from US 21. This reversed lane will be directed to US 17 southbound and eventually I-95 northbound at exit 33 (Point South). The remaining two lanes will be used as described above for the two-lane evacuation.

Hurricane Preparation website

The City of Beaufort has comprehensive information on our website to help you with hurricane preparation. Scan the QR code below to go there.





Music Festival of the Lowcountry

June 8 • Noon- 8 p.m.

Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park

HEADLINERS

Tony Jackson

Candice Glover

Bruce in the USA

Charleston Pipe Band



www.musicfestivalofthelowcountry.com

Music Festival of the Lowcountry will bring a new vibe to Waterfront Park

Jamie Peart and Brittany Underwood saw an opening in Beaufort entertainment, and decided to fill it.

And they don't mind telling you that they are thrilled about what they have planned.

"I've never seen a music festival in Beaufort, and I decided, I'm doing a music festival," Jamie said as she described how she and Brittany came up with the idea.

"Our plan is to have music continuously playing. We'll have four hours of headliners, and four hours of local bands and singers."

*Jamie Peart,
festival organizer*

Jamie has worked closely with the City of Beaufort's Downtown Operations Department to sponsor events as part of her J.P. Signature Group (a division of real estate firm Keller Williams); Brittany is a marketing manager partnering with Jamie who also sings with the band Lowcountry Whalers. They realized that there were a lot of local musicians who did not have a platform. So they decided to create one.

Voilà! The first Music Festival of the Lowcountry will be held from noon to 8 p.m. on Saturday, June 8, at Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park. Headliners will include country singer Tony Jackson, American Idol winner and R&B singer Candice Glover (who happens to be a native of Beaufort), and Bruce in the USA, a Bruce Springsteen tribute band.

A smaller stage will be set up in addition to the main stage at Waterfront Park. "Our plan is to have music continuously playing," Jamie said. "We'll have four hours of headliners, and four hours of local bands and singers."

"We want our local performers to be able to say, 'I opened for Candice Glover or Tony Jackson,'" she added.



The Music Festival of the Lowcountry is the brainchild of Jamie Peart, left, and Brittany Underwood. The eight-hour festival will be held June 8 at Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park.

The event will be free, and will feature food trucks and drink tents. Jamie and Brittany are working on sponsorships to underwrite the cost of the headliners; any surplus will be given to charity.

"We are so excited to see a group really step up and bring more music and vitality to our Waterfront Park," said Ashley Brandon, who manages downtown events for the City of Beaufort. "It's fantastic to have a music festival that will showcase some of our local talent and we sincerely hope they will do this every year."

"We want the crowd to have an amazing time," Brittany said. "As long as they feel pumped and excited to be there, our job is done."

"This will be one fabulous music festival – for the first time, but not the last," Jamie said.

Water Festival: Hard work, but it's all worth it

A little magic and a lot of work goes into the Water Festival

After 67 years of practice, you could make the argument that putting on Beaufort's largest festival, the annual Beaufort Water Festival, is a piece of cake.

Well, not exactly. But the crew that puts it on is a pretty well-oiled piece of machinery. They know their roles, they plan and meet throughout the year, and they get it done.

Meet Todd Stowe and Dusty Vickers. They are two of the 10 coordinators, who along with the 68th Commodore, Josh Schott, organize the festival. This year, as the 68th Annual Beaufort Water Festival approaches, Todd is the program coordinator (it's like "herding cats," he says) and Dusty oversees marketing and public relations.

Both admit they're passionate about the Water Festival. Because once you start to volunteer, it gets in your blood, and you can't say no.

Todd, who teaches at Bridges Preparatory School, began to volunteer during the summer of 1995. "A friend said, you should do it. You get a free T-shirt and a hat — that's how they hook you," he said with a laugh.

Dusty, who used to work for The Greenery, and would pull in trailers to the Water Festival as part of his job, was asked to help out one night in 2011, and that's all it took. He began to volunteer the next year.



Water Festival coordinators Todd Stowe (left) and Dusty Vickers (right), stand with 68th Commodore Josh Schott.

The Beaufort Water Festival

July 12-21, 2024

Henry C. Chambers Waterfront Park

Schedule, events,
and ticket pricing:
bftwaterfestival.com



The big entertainer every year — Concert in the Park on the first Saturday of the festival — is usually an up-and-coming country act. This year, Concert in the Park will feature headliner Parmalee, whose song "Take My Name" was Billboard's most played country song of 2022. Beaufort's own Katie Lynn will be the opening act.

Past headliners have included Blake Shelton, Josh Turner, and Lady Antebellum.

Last year, the festival attracted from 65,000 to 75,000 attendees, a number the coordinators expect to hit again this year.

How do they make it work? The Commodore and the 10 coordinators oversee 26 directors, who in turn manage the staff and volunteers. Roughly 400 people make this happen, and none of them are paid. When it's time to begin planning — in September — for the next festival, the coordinators will hand over their binders, their instructions, and their knowledge to the next round of coordinators.

So yes, it's a lot of work but those 400 people are a family. With one intent — to make this year's Beaufort Water Festival the "Best Festival Ever."



(At left) The Beaufort Gazette recaps action from the first Water Festival in 1956.

Main Street Beaufort is back in business

Organization aims to promote downtown shopping district, bring in tourists and help preserve City's historic charm

Main Street is making a comeback in Beaufort.

In 1983, South Carolina established its Main Street program to help revitalize South Carolina's historic downtowns. Since then, Beaufort has kept up its Main Street affiliation but has not always been active in the program.

This year, under the leadership of Director Ashley Brandon, Main Street Beaufort is up and running. "There are 33 Main Streets in South Carolina," Ashley said. "We all connect through a Facebook group. This allows us to network with our peers, share information and resources."

Belonging to Main Street also means taking advantage of the technical training South Carolina offers to help in historic preservation.

"For example, we can help with storefronts," Ashley said. "What should they look like? What is likely to bring more customers in?"

Main Street Beaufort kicked off earlier this year with its Love Beaufort campaign. It asked downtown merchants in February to decorate their storefronts

with a Valentine's theme, and invited the public to vote on the best storefront.

The results? There were more than 7,000 votes, and Retail Therapy was pronounced the winner.

Main Street Beaufort will shortly have a new website where everything downtown is collected: retailers, restaurants, galleries, tours, events – everything you would need to know about downtown Beaufort to plan a day or weekend of fun.

"Our goal with Main Street," Ashley said, "is to both preserve what makes downtown Beaufort unique, to maintain its history and charm, but also to promote growth, done in the right way."



"We need an ambassador for all the downtown businesses, and Main Street Beaufort provides a synergistic effect that brings all the downtown businesses together under one umbrella to make sure they have what they need to succeed."

Nan Sutton, Owner, Lulu Burgess



Main Street Beaufort Director Ashley Brandon and Nan Sutton, owner of Lulu Burgess.

Main Street Principles

Main Street focuses on Transformation Strategies to help guide a revitalization program. These strategies are underpinned by the "Four Points":

- **Economic vitality** focusing on capital, incentives, and various financial tools.
- **Design** to enhance physical and visual aspects of the commercial district.
- **Promotion** positions the downtown or commercial district as the center of the community and hub of economic activity.
- **Organization** involves creating a strong foundation for a sustainable revitalization effort.

Start of new fiscal year brings budget changes

For the City of Beaufort, there is one season of the year that trumps all the others. And that's Budget Season, which typically starts after the City's Strategic Planning Retreat, usually held no later than early February. Armed with any new directives from City Council that emerge from the retreat, City Manager Scott Marshall and Finance Director Alan Eisenman begin to work in earnest on the next fiscal year budget.

The City's budget year does not begin on January 1, but rather on July 1. The FY2025 (FY=Fiscal Year) budget begins on July 1, 2024, and ends on June 30, 2025.

In March, department directors submit their requested budgets to the city manager and finance director. As much as possible, directors try to keep their budgets flat from year to year, but they must account for inflation, new equipment they need, and new initiatives from the City's Strategic Plan.

The city manager and finance director also examine economic trends in the region – for example, is tourism going strong? Are more businesses opening in the City? Are more people moving to Beaufort? They also are examining opportunities for grant funding that may emerge in the coming year.

The public is invited multiple times to ask questions and offer input on the budget, beginning at the Strategic Planning Retreat, where priorities are set. Every meeting involving City Council allows for public comment, and the public is always welcome to direct their questions to the city manager.

One significant change happened to the budget process for FY2024, and continues to FY2025. For the first time, cap-



City Council members listen to Finance Director Alan Eisenman's budget presentation on April 30.

Questions about the budget?

If you want to know more about how the annual fiscal year budget is put together, please check out the FAQs on our website:



Financial Transparency

Examine in detail the current budget with our financial transparency tool that connects you to opengov.com:



ital projects were incorporated formally into the budget, through a Capital Projects Fund. This allows the City of Beaufort to provide more transparency to its capital project planning, funding, and capital outlays.

By the time you are reading this, the recommended budget will have been presented to City Council at a Work Session, with several steps ahead before it is passed, no later than June 30 of every year. This year, the Second and Final Reading of the Budget Ordinance is scheduled for June 11.

For FY2025, the recommended budget is approximately \$55.7 million, including \$21 million in Capital Projects funds.

Other highlights:

- Continued funding for City Council priorities identified in the FY 2023-2025 Strategic Plan
- Property tax millage rate remains the same at 73.9 mills
- Funding for strategic partners
- \$50,000 for a pilot program to help with neighborhood revitalization and/or rehabilitation of dilapidated structures
- A 3% cost-of-living adjustment, with an additional up to 2% merit increase
- Absorption of a 3% increase in employee health care coverage
- No increase in solid waste fees despite recent escalation of contract costs

Mark your calendar!



Downtown Beaufort events

- First Friday June 7
- Music Festival of the Lowcountry June 8
- Firecracker 5K.....July 4
- First FridayJuly 5
- Water Festival July 12-21

- First Friday Aug. 2
- First FridaySept. 6
- Shrimp Festival (includes First Friday)... Oct. 4-5
- First FridayNov. 1
- Turkey Trot Nov. 28
- Holiday Weekend.....Dec. 6-8



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CITY HALL

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Beaufort, SC 29902



cityofbeaufort.org

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2023-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN



Cover photo by Shawn Hill; inside photos by Shawn Hill and Tony Junker.



The Beacon

Spring/Summer 2024