

**NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL BUDGET WORK SESSION
MINUTES
March 24, 2026**

Newberry County Council met on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at 5:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at the Courthouse Annex, 1309 College Street, Newberry, SC, for a regular scheduled Budget Work Session.

Notice of the meeting was duly advertised, as required by law.

PRESENT: Robert Shealy, Chairman
Karl Sease, Vice-Chairman
Leon Fulmer Jr., Council Member
Todd Johnson, Council Member
Travis Reeder, Council Member
Johnny Mack Scurry, Council Member
Stuart Smith, Council Member
Ted Luckadoo, County Administrator
Karen Brehmer, Deputy County Administrator
Captain Ben Chapman, NCSO
Debbie Cromer, Finance Director
Rick Farmer, Economic Development Director
Sheriff Lee Foster, NCSO
Coroner Laura Kneece, NCCO
Jessie Long, Economic Development Coordinator
Melissa Mote, Assessor
Eric Nieto, IT Director
Josh Rowe, Public Works Director
Katie Werts, Director of Planning and Development
Wendy Wise, Delinquent Tax Collector
Andrew Wigger, Clerk to Council/PIO

MEDIA: Kelly Duncan, The Newberry Observer

1. Call to order: Robert Shealy, Chairman.

- Mr. Shealy called the meeting to order at 5 p.m.

2. Invocation and Pledge: Johnny Mack Scurry, Councilman.

- Mr. Scurry led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Presentation and Discussion of 2026-27 Newberry County Budget.

- Mr. Luckadoo said this year's projected budget is \$42,003,042, an increase of \$2,162,840 or 5.4% increase compared to the current fiscal year. There is not a proposed General Fund millage increase, or fee increases within this budget. However, staff is requesting that council increase tipping fees at the transfer station, \$3 per ton and the fuel surcharge of \$1 per ton to offset the increased cost of operating the facility and disposing of solid waste. This increase is projected to generate an additional 5% in revenue and would raise the rates to \$73 per ton for the first thousand tons in the fiscal year, and \$75 per ton after the first thousand tons in the fiscal year and \$12 per ton in the fuel surcharges.
- Mr. Luckadoo reviewed other revenues including an increase of about \$1.4 million in property taxes (without a millage increase). This is due to a combined increase in real estate and vehicle taxes.
- Mr. Luckadoo mentioned watercraft taxes which is projected to go down due to legislation change.
- Mr. Reeder asked if they were going to redo all the cars with new computers, for the SROs, via a grant the county is pursuing. Mr. Luckadoo said this would be new vehicles for SROs with computers and tasers.
- Mr. Luckadoo said they are recommending a \$2.4 GO Bond, staff is recommending they enter into a lease purchase agreement for this upcoming fiscal year which will generate that \$2.4 million. This will be for the purchase of two ambulances, a fire engine, a triaxle dump truck, a heavy-duty trailer, and an asphalt hot box.
- In this proposed budget, they have a use of \$744,193 of planned use of fund balance. This amount is higher than it is in the current year, it is lower than what the county has typically budgeted in the past. Budgeting the use of fund balance is a tool for balancing the budget, not an actual plan to use the fund balance itself because county departments consistently spend only 95% of their budget on an annual basis, actual revenue exceeds expenditure estimates in the budget.
- Mr. Johnson made a comment that he hates the term "tipping fees" and wished there was something else they could call it something else as it sounds like you are tipping someone.

- Mr. Johnson also clarified that Newberry County does not set the vehicle tax rate, and that is set by the state, and the county follows the formula. Meaning the vehicle tax rate will be the same regardless.
- Mr. Johnson also mentioned that when people look at fines, they think the county is getting a million dollars in fines, but the reality is it costs way more than that to generate that fine revenue. He said when they account for three full-time magistrates, courthouse staff, the deputy that writes the tickets, the reality is you are not getting money, you are losing money on doing that. He said this is not a money maker, and the state takes 60% off of the ticket.
- Mr. Luckadoo went over the General Fund budgets, highlighting the significant changes that exist within the budget.
- Mr. Luckadoo said they would hold off on reviewing the Public Safety budget during the next meeting to verify the numbers.
- Mr. Johnson asked if there was an increase for the employees who work at the Recycling Centers. Mr. Luckadoo said there wasn't a request put in from the Council on Aging for an increase in salaries. Mr. Johnson asked staff to consider that.
- Mr. Shealy asked if Building and Zoning have used SafeBuilt for residential inspections in the past (as they are a backup in the budget), to which Ms. Werts answered in the affirmative.
- Mr. Shealy departed the meeting at 6:32 p.m.
- Newberry County Council went into a recess at 6:40 p.m. They returned at 7:07 p.m.
- Mr. Fulmer asked regarding the 3% increase for employees, but under each department it has employee salaries the same and if staff is not accounting for the increase. Mr. Luckadoo said the 3% is within the non-departmental line item, and if approved it will be adjusted to show those increases. This will not change the overall budget.
 - Mr. Sease asked if it is not approved, will that come off the budget; Mr. Luckadoo said that that money would be reallocated to other needs, but he strongly recommends they give that 3% increase.
- Mr. Johnson asked if they have looked into cloud backup versus local backup; Mr. Nieto said they have been on cloud backup and have both.
- Mr. Johnson asked about the raises, the 2.2% CPI and .8% for competitiveness, he said he is concerned they are not keeping up county wide salaries, especially with private sector salaries getting higher and higher. He said he wants to make sure they are not balancing the budget on the backs of employees.

- Mr. Luckadoo reviewed the Special Revenue Fund. Which is a lot of where the county accounts for grants, among other funds.

4. Comments and/or Requests from Councilmembers.

- Mr. Fulmer said he appreciated all the work staff put into the budget and he looks forward to the next meeting.
- Mr. Reeder also expressed his appreciation for their hard work and added that it has been that way every year since he has been on council.
- Mr. Luckadoo said this could not be done without the department heads putting their time and attention into their budgets.

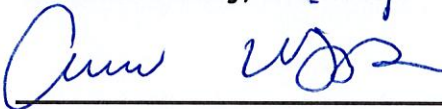
5. Adjournment.

- Mr. Johnson made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Reeder provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.
- The Newberry County Council Budget Work Session adjourned at 7:36 p.m.

NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL



Robert Shealy, Chairman



Andrew Wigger, Clerk to Council

Minutes Approved: 4-15-20