

**NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL  
MINUTES  
May 6, 2026**

Newberry County Council met on Wednesday, May 6, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers at the Courthouse Annex, 1309 College Street, Newberry, SC, for a regular scheduled meeting.

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 (virtual)  
Travis Reeder, Council Member  
Johnny Mack Scurry, Council Member  
Ted Luckadoo, County Administrator  
Joanie Winters, County Attorney  
Karen Brehmer, Deputy County Administrator  
Captain Ben Chapman, NCSO  
Debbie Cromer, Finance Director  
Rick Farmer, Economic Development Director  
Sheriff Lee Foster, NCSO  
Jessie Long, Economic Development Coordinator  
Eric Nieto, IT Director  
Katie Werts, Director of Planning and Development  
Andrew Wigger, Clerk to Council/PIO

ABSENT: Stuart Smith, Council Member

1. Call to order: Robert Shealy, Chairman.
  - Mr. Shealy called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.
2. Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance: Leon Fulmer, Council Member.
  - Mr. Fulmer led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Adoption of Minutes:

- a. Newberry County Council Work Session Minutes – April 15, 2026.
- b. Newberry County Council Minutes – April 15, 2026.

- Mr. Sease made a motion to accept the minutes as presented; Mr. Fulmer provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.

4. Approval of Agenda.

- Mr. Scurry made a motion to approve the agenda as presented; Mr. Reeder provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.

5. Proclamations/Resolutions:

- a. Proclamation recognizing National Small Business Week in Newberry County.

- Mr. Reeder made a motion to accept the Proclamation; Mr. Fulmer provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.
- Representatives from the Newberry County Chamber of Commerce, Hamm Hardware and Building Supplies (which is celebrating 100 years in business), and the Small Business Development Center accepted a copy of the Proclamation.

- b. Resolution 03-2026. Recognizing Newberry County Sheriff's Office law enforcement officers, telecommunicators, correctional officers and employees.

- Mr. Sease made a motion to accept the Resolution; Mr. Fulmer provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.
- Members of the Newberry County Sheriff's Office accepted a copy of the Resolution.

6. Administrator's Report.

- Mr. Luckadoo said staff is moving forward with the implementation of a new online tax estimator that will be on the Newberry County website, under the Auditor and Assessor's office. This will allow residents to go on and project new vehicle taxes, see what high mileage impact will have on the tax bill, and will

allow people looking to relocate to Newberry County to see the taxes on a house.

- There will be a Community Information Session related to data centers on May 18 at 6:00 p.m. with two panelist who specialize in data centers and utility financial impacts related to them. Several questions have already been received, and people will be able to write and submit questions the night of the session via the moderator Jimmie Coggins.
- A pre-bid meeting was held at the Newberry County Airport on April 28 for the taxi way rehabilitation project with three contractors in attendance. The projected cost is \$2.4 million; the county only has an obligation of \$57,000 due to FAA and state funding. The bid opening will be May 21.
- The county will be opening bids for the new Public Safety Complex on May 13 at 3:00 p.m.

#### 7. Chairman's Comments.

- Mr. Shealy told staff good work on keeping everyone informed and making good progress with the projects.
- Mr. Shealy said as everyone is concerned about data centers, he is as well and he plans on being at the Newberry Opera House to educate himself, as well.

#### 8. Public Hearings:

- a. Ordinance 04-01-2026, Providing Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 26/27 Budget.
  - Mr. Tyler Johnson said this past December when developer fees were voted in, the discussion stated that during the next budget, they'd be readdressed because they'd be a part of the fee schedule. He said he is bringing this up because to date, they have not been brought up, and he wanted to make sure that did not slip through the cracks.
    - Mr. Luckadoo said he appreciated that, and it was brought to their attention, and they would get those in before third and final reading. He also said that if the Ordinance regarding building permit fees penalties passes, that will need to be put into the Ordinance as well.

#### 9. Public Comments Regarding Items on the Agenda (three minutes).

- Mr. Steve McKean said this county provides the resources that make agriculture possible. He said they want to look at the protection of water rights for the residents and farming community. He said the farming community has carried this county for a long time. He said that Newberry County Water and Sewer Authority has about 5,000 customers, City of Newberry Utilities has a little less than 10,000, and Whitmire produces for about 1,000 customers. The remaining residents are all working off of well water, including the farming and agriculture communities. He said while speaking about Project Altair, the biggest component to consider is where the water is coming from and who hurts the most from taking from it.
- Mr. Jamie Johnson wanted to discuss the information meeting on May 18. He said he was at a meeting on Saturday, along with a few council members and Mr. Luckadoo, where this information meeting was discussed. He said the two panelist, Mr. Christopher Lloyd and Mr. Cole Price, Mr. Lloyd being an economic development consultant and Mr. Price works for a utility service that sells to Newberry Coop. He said they are both pro data centers, but that is not necessarily a group of people they want commenting only. He said the written questions were going to be given to a mediator and they need to give pro and con information and they need to know the downside of a data center.
- Mr. Charlie Stuck said talking to people in the community and looking at statistics, that 75% of people don't like speaking in public. He said 47% of people in the United States are against building new data centers, with 38% of people being for them. He said he has the same concerns as Mr. Johnson as they need to see the cons, not just the pros. He said in the past, 87% of data centers were in urban areas, moving forward 67% are being pushed into rural areas because of water sources and noise.
- Ms. Julia Pinckney echoed the prior speakers regarding the May 18 meeting, she recommended having an environmental element, what happens to the water, what happens to the electricity, not only will it be consumed but how will it be distributed afterwards, particularly water. She said often times they are described as a closed loop system but that is not entirely the case, and she is interested in the economic impact, tax advantages or tax breaks and how many people will be employed, understanding construction brings jobs for a time. She said if the infrastructure is not here today, how much of that burden can be put back on the AI center.
- Ms. Gerdi Lake said she cares deeply about Newberry County and the rural character that defines who they are. She said a significant number of

constituents believe data centers do not have a place in the community. She said there have been hearings in the Senate and the House with utility companies that many data center proposals are speculative, and they often drop out and communities are left with dealing with consequences. She said several county residents only recently learned about projects (in other counties) where NDAs were signed and that is not transparency. She said data centers put drains on resources that will require major grid upgrades. She said water use is also a concern. She said when a project is good for the community, it does not hide its numbers. She said the May 18 meeting is just the next step in a process that's already moved too far without the public's full knowledge or involvement. She is asking council not to sign any NDAs as that limits what the public could know. She also asked not to risk the power and water supplies for a project that brings few permanent jobs.

10. Old Business:

- a. Third Reading – Ordinance 03-02-2026. A text amendment of section 153.073 to the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 153) which will allow for Outdoor Retail Sales.
  - Mr. Reeder made a motion to accept third reading; Mr. Scurry provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.
- b. Third Reading – Ordinance 03-03-2026. A text amendment section 151.04 to the Zoning Ordinance (Chapter 153) establishing a penalty to building permit fees.
  - Mr. Sease made a motion to accept third reading; Mr. Fulmer provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.
- c. Third Reading – Ordinance 03-04-2026. Rezoning property located at Folk Road and Calvary Church Road, Newberry, consisting of 8.34 acres, from LC-Limited Commercial to R2-Rural. (TMS 335-24).
  - Mr. Reeder made a motion to accept third reading; Mr. Sease provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.

d. Third Reading – Ordinance 03-05-2026. Rezoning property located at the corner of Lindler Field Road and US Hwy 76, Little Mountain, consisting of 3.04 acres, from RS-Single Family Residential to R2-Rural. (TMS 640-83).

- Mr. Sease made a motion to accept third reading; Mr. Fulmer provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.

e. Second Reading – Ordinance 04-01-2026, Providing Appropriations for the Fiscal Year 26/27 Budget.

- Mr. Reeder made a motion to accept third reading; Mr. Scurry provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.

11. New Business:

- There was no new business.

12. Possible Actions by Council following the 5 p.m. Executive Session.

- There was no action taken.

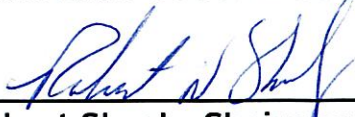
13. Appointments:

- There were no appointments.

14. Adjournment.

- Mr. Fulmer made a motion to adjourn; Mr. Scurry provided the second and the motion carried 6-0.
- Newberry County Council adjourned at 6:44 p.m.

**NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL**



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**Robert Shealy, Chairman**



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**Andrew Wigger, Clerk to Council**

**Minutes Approved:** 5-20-20