

NEWBERRY COUNTY COUNCIL

MINUTES

August 17, 2022

The Newberry County Council met on Wednesday, August 17, 2022, 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: Todd Johnson, Chair (District 1)
Les Hipp, Vice-Chair (District 5)
Mary Arrowood, Council Member (District 2)
Henry H. Livingston, III, Council Member (District 3)
Robert N. Shealy, Council Member (District 4)
Johnny Mack Scurry, Council Member (District 6)
Travis Reeder, Council Member (District 7)
Christopher Inglese, County Administrator
Karen Brehmer, Deputy County Administrator
Debbie S. Cromer, Finance Director
Crystal Walrop, Purchasing Director
Jacquelyn R. Lawrence, Clerk to Council

MEDIA: Andrew Wigger, Newberry Observer

Mr. Johnson called the meeting to order and determined a quorum to be present.

Mr. Shealy had the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

1. Additions, Deletions and Adoption of the Agenda

Mr. Shealy moved to adopt the agenda as written; seconded by Mrs. Arrowood. With no further discussion, Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

2. Public Appearance:

Steven Knapp – The Newberry Museum Executive Director

Mr. Knapp introduced himself and explained how he came to be in Newberry SC. He went on to explain how the museum works. Prior to the formation of the Newberry Museum, the artifacts and histories of Newberry County were forced to go elsewhere for preservation. The museum now provides a safe place for artifacts and histories to be cared for by a dedicated staff, supported by passionate volunteers. Additionally, the museum researches the stories of Newberry County. An example of one of the greatest stories is of Henry Bluford. Mr. Bluford was one of the first African American police officer killed in the line of duty during a riot on McKibben Street in 1874.

Education is a large part of the museum as well. Through the exhibits, programs, and educational outreach the museum provides Newberry County with a resource for historical study and furthering the educational opportunities of Newberry students and life-long learners. Groups of all ages are encouraged to come and learn from the museum.

The economic side of the museum is vital to the success of the museum. Through corporate partnerships, building business relationships, and heritage tourism, the Newberry Museum promotes the cultural and economic opportunities of Newberry County.

Having the museum provides a repository for our history and artifacts from the County. For local businesses it provides a draw for potential customers. The museum is also a place for local businesses to show off for potential investors and customers. The Newberry Museum demonstrates to the outside world that Newberry County is a place that values history, people, and the future.

Liz McDonald – Newberry County Assessor

Mrs. McDonald explained the new agricultural tax exemption. The exemption applies to certain agricultural buildings and farm structures. The exemption does not require an application. Within the 46 counties, all are interpreting the new law differently. Newberry County is sticking to the fact that the exemption does require that you are a producer. The production must be their primary source of revenue. This would include livestock, poultry, crops, farm equipment, machinery, self-propelled machinery, etc.

Regarding how this will affect the County financially, in the spring the numbers were around \$818,000 in assessed value which equated to about \$300,000 in taxes. Half of that amount went to the school taxes and the other half was real

property taxes that could possibly be lost with this exemption. Staff should be able to lower those numbers now that there is a better understanding of the law and which properties it will exempt. Another note, tenant houses would not qualify for the exemption. Staff is working closely with DOR and other counties to make this transition as smooth as possible. It will be a work in progress for a while. Should a property owner feel that they should qualify for the exemption, they will be asked to complete a form and provide some documentation to the Assessor to show that the request does in fact qualify.

Kinards area has about 28% of that number. It will be affected the most. Whitmire area will be affected a little less. The surrounding area of the city will be affected some and the areas around the lakes will be affected the least. Newberry has experienced a tremendous amount of growth this year as far as new construction. Newberry Landing and Stuart Landing are new subdivisions in the County as a whole. This growth should help with some of the loss in revenue.

Raleigh Hickman – Director of Veterans Affairs

Mr. Hickman is former Army and Navy Serviceman. His roots are from South Carolina. He is married with 5 daughters, 6 granddaughters, and 1 grandson. Newberry County has been very welcoming to him. Veteran Affairs is very important to Mr. Hickman. He stated that the Pact Act has just been passed that entitles 2,000,000 more soldiers with benefits that they deserve. Mr. Hickman is excited to have the opportunity to serve the veterans of Newberry County and to assure that they receive the benefits that they deserve.

3. Resolution to adopt an Employee Recognition and Longevity Salary Adjustment Policy

Mr. Inglese stated that this Resolution would codify the previous practice that recognized employees for their longevity of service to the County. Should this Resolution be adopted it would be included in the next employee handbook. The Resolution provides for a 1% salary adjustment for every 10-year increment of service. It would also provide for a recognition pin for every 5-year increment of service.

Mr. Hipp asked if this would be an increase from what was being done before?

Mr. Inglese stated that this proposal was exponentially better than what was offered before. Additionally, this would be retroactive to January 1, 2022. Once the Resolution is adopted the employees that have not been recognized would then be brought before Council for recognition.

Council asked if Department Directors had been contacted regarding this matter and has there been any criticism?

Mr. Inglese stated that some departments had been contacted and the only criticism was that it was not a flat amount being given.

Mr. Livingston stated that he would be voting against this Resolution as it could cause too much disparity amongst the employees.

Mrs. Arrowood made a motion that the Resolution be changed to reflect the 1% increase with a cap of \$500, seconded by Mr. Reeder. With no further discussion, Mr. Johnson called for the vote. Vote was unanimous.

4. Ordinance No. 05-16-2022 – An Ordinance establishing procedures and requirements for entering into development agreements in Newberry County.

a. Public Hearing

Mr. Johnson declared the public hearing open. With no one present to speak for or against the Ordinance, Mr. Johnson declared the public hearing closed.

b. Third and Final Reading

Mr. Hipp moved to adopt the third and final reading, seconded by Mr. Shealy. With no further discussion, Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

5. Ordinance No. 06-19-2022 - An Ordinance acting on a request to amend the official zoning map established pursuant to Zoning Ordinance No. 12-24-01 as revised and amended by Zoning Ordinance No. 6-11-16 and codified in Chapter 153 of the Newberry County Code of Ordinances, establishes zoning classification and districts so as to rezone one (1) real estate parcel totaling three and eighty-seven hundredths (3.87) acres designated as TMS No. 28-1-1-6, from R2 – Rural to GC – General Commercial.

a. Public Hearing

Mr. Johnson declared the public hearing open. With no one present to speak for or against the Ordinance, Mr. Johnson declared the public hearing closed.

b. Third and Final Reading

Mr. Shealy moved to adopt the second reading, seconded by Mr. Hipp. With no further discussion, Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

6. Ordinance No. 07-20-2022 - An Ordinance for the purpose of leasing out certain county fairgrounds property.

a. Second Reading

Mr. Inglese stated the only change from first reading was the packet included the lease agreement. The lease terms stated at first reading remain the same.

Mr. Shealy moved to adopt the second reading, seconded by Mr. Reeder. With no further discussion, Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

7. Discussion/Approval of RFP for external audit services – Crystal Waldrop

Crystal Waldrop, Procurement Director, stated staff had reached out Mauldin & Jenkins per Council's request and they have agreed to reduce their bid by \$5000. The reason they did not reduce further is that they are new to the County, there are some additional GASB requirements regarding leases this year, retaining qualified employees on staff, and what is required of the audit. The County currently has \$41,000 budgeted for the audit.

Mr. Inglese stated in the interest of time we should move forward and that the additional cost should be able to be absorbed elsewhere. However, if it is not then a budget ordinance could be presented later in the year.

Mr. Hipp moved to accept the proposal for the \$60,000 fee, contingent on a one-year contract, seconded by Mr. Scurry. With no further discussion, Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

8. Executive Session

Code Section §30-4-70 (a) of the Code of Laws of SC, as amended, 1976

- (1) Discussion of employment, appointment, compensation, promotion, demotion, discipline, or release of an employee, a student, or a person regulated by a public body or the appointment of a person to a public body; however, if an adversary hearing involving the employee or client is held, the employee or client has the right to demand the hearing be conducted publicly. Nothing contained in this item shall prevent the public body, in its discretion, from deleting names of the other employees or clients whose records are submitted for use at the hearing.*
- (2) Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements and proposed sale or purchase of property, the receipt of legal advice where the legal advice relates to a pending, threatened, or potential claim or other matters covered by the attorney-client privilege, settlement of legal claims, or the position of the public agency in other adversary situations involving the assertion against the agency of a claim.*

- (3) Discussion of matters relating to the proposed location, expansion, or the provision of services encouraging location or expansion of industries or other businesses in the area served by the public body.

Mr. Shealy moved to go into Executive Session to discuss the matters as set forth above; seconded by Mr. Reeder. There being no further discussion, Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

6:52 P.M. – 9:24 P.M.

Mr. Shealy moved to return to open session; seconded by Mr. Scurry. Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Hipp made a motion to create a full-time employee in the coroner's office. This position is funded by the State of South Carolina and contingent upon that funding. If The State continues to fund the position, the position will remain. Mr. Johnson noted that two part-time positions would be removed to make room for this position. The funds being provided can only be used for said position. The motion was seconded by Mrs. Arrowood. With no further discussion, Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

9. Adoption of Consent Agenda

a. Newberry County Council Meeting – Minutes July 20, 2022

Mr. Reeder moved to adopt the consent agenda; seconded by Mr. Shealy. Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

10. Appointments

Mr. Reeder moved to reappoint Vina Abrams to the Central Midlands Council of Government Board, seconded by Mr. Shealy. With no further discussion, Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

Mr. Johnson moved to reappoint Tommy Amick to the Airport Commission, seconded by Mr. Reeder. With no further discussion, Mr. Johnson called for the vote. The vote was unanimous.

11. Public Comments

No public comments made.

12. Comments/Request from County Administrator

There will be a fair in Newberry August 25-28, 2022.

Paperless paystubs are in the works.

Mr. Inglese will be on WKDK August 18, 2022.

13. Comments/Request from Council Members

Mr. Johnson noted that he was able to attend the Economic Development Strategic Task Force meeting, and everything seems to be moving along very well.

14. Future Meetings

- a. County Council - September 7, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.*
- b. Finance Committee- September 12, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.*
- c. County Council - September 21, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.*
- d. Public Safety Committee - September 26, 2022, at 6:00 p.m.*

15. Adjournment

Mrs. Arrowood moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Mr. Shealy. Mr. Johnson called for the vote. Vote was unanimous. The meeting adjourned at 9:32 p.m.

Newberry County Council

Todd Johnson, Chairman

Jackie Lawrence, Clerk to Council

Minutes approved: September 7, 2022