



# GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes  
Committee of the Whole Meeting  
January 20, 2026  
4:32 p.m.

Committee Meeting Room  
301 University Ridge  
Greenville, South Carolina

## Council Members

**Benton Blount**, *Chairman, District 19*  
**Rick Bradley**, *Vice-Chairman, District 26*  
**Liz Seman**, *Chairwoman Pro Tem, District 24*  
**Joey Russo**, *District 17*  
**Kelly Long**, *District 18*  
**Stephen Shaw**, *District 20*  
**Curt McGahhey**, *District 21*  
**Frank Farmer**, *District 22*  
**Alan Mitchell**, *District 23*  
**Ennis Fant, Sr.**, *District 25*  
**Garey Collins**, *District 27*  
**Dan Tripp**, *District 28*

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Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place and agenda was posted online, at 301 University Ridge, Greenville, and made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

### Council Members Absent

None

### Staff Present

**Joe Kernell**, *County Administrator*  
**Ted Lambrecht**, *Deputy County Administrator*  
**Chris Antley**, *County Attorney*  
**Jessica Stone**, *Deputy Clerk to Council*  
**Pam Gilliam**, *Administrative Assistant*  
**Julie Wallace**, *Administrative Assistant*

### Others Present

**Jay Gresham**, *Clerk of Court*  
**Brad Love**, *Bond Counsel, Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd PA*

### Council Members Remote Participation

**Dan Tripp**, *District 28*

**Bob Mihalic**, *Governmental Affairs Officer*  
**Terrence Galloway**, *Information Systems*  
**Hesha Gamble**, *Assistant County Administrator*  
**Ronald Hollister**, *Assistant County Administrator*

### Call to Order

Chairman Blount

### Invocation

Councilor Russo

**Item (3)**

**Approval of Minutes**

- a. **January 6, 2026 – Regular Committee Meeting**
- b. **January 8, 2026 – Special Called Committee Meeting**

**Action:** Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to approve the minutes of the January 6, 2026, Regular Committee meeting and the January 8, 2026, Special Called Committee meeting.

Motion carried.

**Item (4)**

**Arena District Presentation**

Presented by: Beth Paul, Executive Director  
Bon Secours Wellness Center

**INTRODUCTION:**

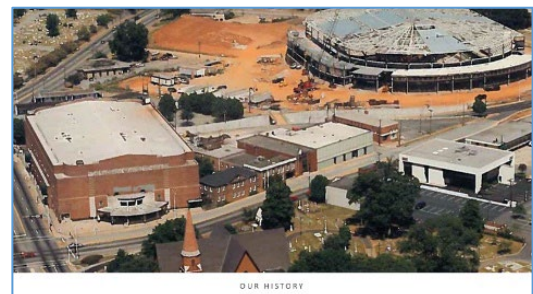
Ms. Paul thanked Council for its leadership in appointing members to the Arena District Board, as well as the county departments that worked with the district. Ms. Paul also thanked the Greenville Arena District team for all of its hard work. Ms. Paul stated the proposed was the culmination of a large team of experts who lived in Greenville County. LS3P was the design team, supported by Gensler (architectural firm); Haynsworth, Sinkler, Boyd was also in attendance to answer questions, if necessary, as were the Arena District’s financial advisors and Board of Directors.

Ms. Paul stated when she became the Executive Director in 2015, there was a very specific strategic plan for the arena, based on really strong financial stewardship. Over the past ten years, the Arena successfully increased its net operating revenue five times, emphasizing its commitment to the community. That focus has allowed the Arena to reinvest in community programs, which was an important aspect of the strategic plan.

Additionally, the Arena had plans to reinvest in its facilities. In the last four years, with one more year to go, the Arena District will have invested \$29 million in capital improvements. Those improvements include upgrades such as a new roof, HVAC chiller, ice chiller, and suite renovations, among other projects. The \$29 million figure was significant as additional renovations were to be considered, as those investments were essential for maintaining organizational health.

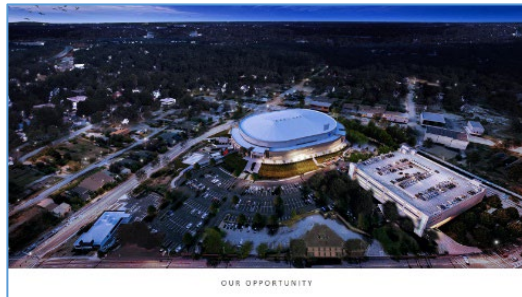
Ms. Paul highlighted that from her first day, building a strong partnership with County Council and the community had been a priority, making everyone a vital part of the Arena District’s future.

Ms. Paul stated Phase I of the presentation was focused on design. After reviewing the slides, they would discuss the proposed ordinances.



## PHASE I

Ms. Paul stated she wanted to re-emphasize that the Greenville Arena District was a Special Purpose District of the State of South Carolina. It was a political subdivision, with the board members recommended by County Council and appointed by the Governor. The Arena District had a rich history, hosting more than 3,000 events and having a tremendous economic impact over the years.

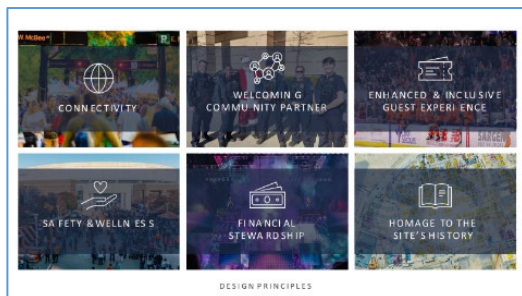


Ms. Paul stated they had a great opportunity to not only reimagine the Arena and how it served Greenville County and its residents, its small businesses, and how it created jobs, but to really look at the full campus with its 12 acres, imagining what it might look like.



The dots on the map represented potential competitors. The yellow dots represented “new builds”; buildings that were not even considered when the Bi-Lo Center was built in 1998. The orange dots represented arenas undergoing a process similar to the Arena District's, competing for major acts and collegiate athletics. Ms. Paul stated they needed to remain “best in class” to deliver a high quality of life benefit to the citizens of Greenville County and positively impact the economy.

In 2024, the Arena District petitioned Council to approve a \$70 million general obligation bond; the request was not approved. Ms. Paul stated that denial afforded them the opportunity to understand what Council was looking for in a project and embark on their master plan. She stated the master plan had been completed and included an economic impact study with updated numbers.




The Master Plan included the following Design Principles:

- *Connectivity*
- *Welcoming Community Partners*
- *Enhanced & Inclusive Guest Experience*
- *Safety & Wellness*
- *Financial Stewardship*
- *Homage to the Site's History*

### \$2 Billion Economic Impact

BSWA has served as an economic engine for Greenville County, the Upstate and South Carolina, driving a cumulative gross economic impact of \$2 billion through more than 3,000 events attended by 12 million guests.



### GREENVILLE COUNTY IMPACT

OVER 25 YEARS

<b>\$468 MILLION</b> NET NEW DIRECT SPENDING IN GREENVILLE COUNTY	<b>\$850 MILLION</b> TOTAL OUTPUT TO GREENVILLE COUNTY
<b>750 FTE JOBS</b> CREATED IN GREENVILLE COUNTY	<b>\$243 MILLION</b> IN PERSONAL EARNINGS TO COUNTY RESIDENTS

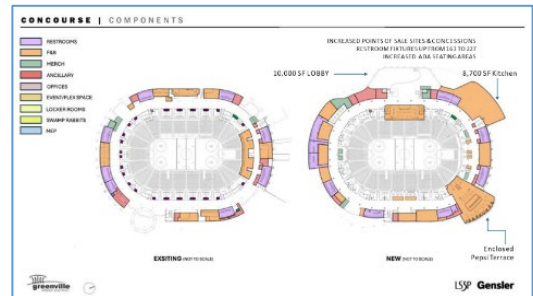
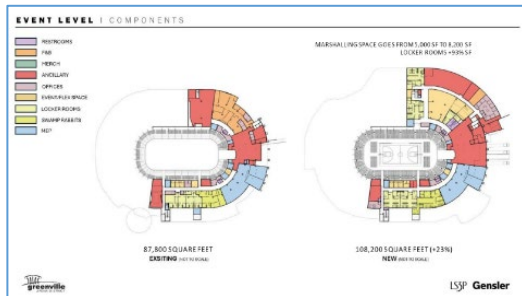
Ms. Paul stated Bon Secours Wellness Arena was an economic engine, generating \$2 billion in economic impact since the venue opened in 1998, with 3000 events and more than 12 million guests passing through its doors. More specifically, in Greenville County over the past 25 years, \$468 million in net new direct spending, \$850 million total output to Greenville County, 750 full-time equivalent jobs, and \$243 million in personal earnings. In terms of one fiscal year, approximately \$56 million in economic output to Greenville County and 500 full-time equivalent jobs.

### Looking Ahead to the next 25 years

Positioning BSWA for the next 25 years and beyond, while imagining how Greenville might use 12 acres.



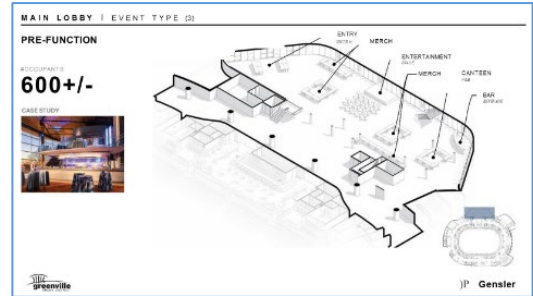
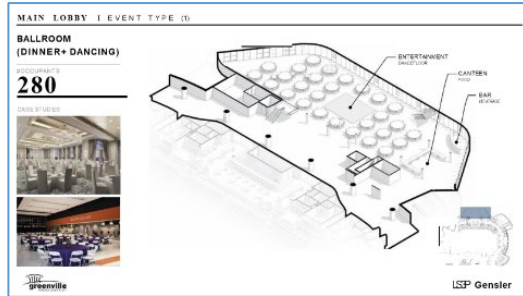
Ms. Paul stated it was important to position Bon Secours Wellness Arena for the next 25 years and beyond. She stated by the time any considerable renovation was completed, the arena would be over 30 years old.



In terms of design, improvements were needed in the artist and client amenities; the arena was currently deficient in those spaces. Square footage would increase from 87,000 square feet to 108,000 square feet. Ms. Paul stated the locker rooms would be enlarged to meet industry standards. Media space would also be increased, which was especially important for the NCAA and SEC. Overall, the “back of house” would be much higher functioning and efficient.



Ms. Paul stated the concourse level was currently very tight; it was critical to improve the concourse circulation. By increasing the number of points of sale for food and beverage, the number of thick plumbing fixtures, and ADA seating, the arena would be able to offer a best in class fan experience on the concourse level. One of the goals of the renovated concourse level was safety, with guests pulled around to an expedited entry into the arena.



Ms. Paul stated in terms of the arena’s 12 acres, it was important to look to the future and understand the possibilities for the acreage. The City of Greenville owned the Church Street Garage. She stated they would like to build a 6000-7000 seat amphitheater. One main difference from the master plan revealed in April 2025 was the reconsideration of parking options. The underground parking was cost-prohibitive; the arena would like to expand the Church Street Garage in collaboration with the City of Greenville. Ms. Paul stated she anticipated the amphitheater would host 25-30 commercial touring shows per summer, generating an additional \$50 million in economic impact. The intent would be to use the campus year-round, both indoors and outdoors, and to create recreation in an outdoor winter setting. She stated the arena was very committed to being a good neighbor, putting sound barriers in place. The new outdoor space would create new jobs during the summer months, when the arena was typically slow.

Councilor Shaw asked whether the second story of the concourse shown in the slides already existed or was part of the proposed renovation.

Ms. Paul stated the second story was part of the proposed renovation.



**PHASE II**

**OUR LEGACY PARTNERS**

- Greenville Arena District
- Greenville County
- City of Greenville
- State of South Carolina

greenville 13P Gensler

Ms. Paul stated Greenville Arena District was a special purpose district of the State of South Carolina. It was formed in the 1940's to own and operate the Greenville Memorial Auditorium. She stated that the district has a long-standing relationship with Greenville County, the City of Greenville, and the state of South Carolina.

**\$282 MILLION ESTIMATED COST**

- \$193 million for Arena work (anticipated in 2 phases)
- \$71 million for Amphitheater
- \$18 million for Parking

greenville 13P Gensler

Ms. Paul stated the anticipated budget for the proposed renovations was \$282 million. That number may increase, and there was some room for escalation. She stated as they worked through the designs, the cost would be refined. Ms. Paul stated they were prepared to present three ordinances and start with an open discussion.

Chairman Blount asked Ms. Paul to speak about the market's competitiveness in terms of tours. Something that may be insignificant to the general public, such as dressing room size, could determine whether a tour picked Greenville or another venue.

Ms. Paul stated an enhanced “back of house” would leave a memorable impression. For example, an agent may represent multiple artists. If they were impressed with BSWA, they could choose to book additional shows. She stated the agent for Kelsey Ballerini had a great time when she did a show in Greenville. Because they had a great experience, they chose to come back. However, the amenities at Bon Secours were undersized and not modern. The current locker room size was about 700 square feet; the new design would approach approximately 2000 square feet per locker room.

Catering was very important and could “make or break” a day. Currently, tour caters cooked outside under a tent. The proposed renovations included a specific tour catering kitchen. The arena only had two bays. A show scheduled for the next few days had 23 trucks, with only two bays available for unloading. Additional bays would improve efficiency.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman asked Ms. Paul to elaborate on the competitiveness of bidding for sports events.

Ms. Paul stated it was an incredibly competitive environment and became more so with each cycle. For instance, BSWA would be bidding on the NCAA in the near future. While they would host in 2026, the bid cycle for 2030 and 2031 would open very soon. It was important to make sure the arena at least met the NCAA’s minimum standards. Ms. Paul stated there were certain areas of those standards they were very, very challenged to meet. They could temporarily modify certain areas of the arena to meet those recommendations; however, their competitors did not need to make any modifications. Looking at the Carolinas alone, Charlotte just completed a \$285 million renovation, and the Lenovo Center in Raleigh was currently undergoing a major renovation. She stated the Gwinnett Center in Duluth just approved a \$170 million renovation to its arena; the campus had already been renovated and included a convention center. Ms. Paul stated the arena in Birmingham, Alabama, had not hosted the NCAA in a number of years. It was renovated during the pandemic and was recently awarded an NCAA bid.

Councilor McGahhey stated he had received several phone calls about the arena and some people believed it was a private enterprise. He asked her to elaborate on the arena’s relationship with Council and how it was created by the State of South Carolina.

Ms. Paul stated Greenville Arena District, originally called the Greenville Memorial Auditorium District, was created in 1940 by the State of South Carolina. The district’s purpose was to build, own, and operate a facility for live entertainment. She stated it was a political subdivision of the State, a form of public government. Ms. Paul stated the confusion may be due to the name of the arena. Bon Secours bought “naming rights” to the arena, but did not own it. Entities such as Bon Secours and Bi-Lo paid for those naming rights and also paid a portion of the arena’s operating revenues.

Councilor Farmer asked Ms. Paul to speak to the competitiveness of the SEC Women’s Championship, particularly with Birmingham.

Ms. Paul stated BSWA was in year one of a three-year contract with the SEC. The goal was to renew that contract. Birmingham was in close proximity to several SEC schools, which was very important to the selection. She stated the SEC Headquarters was located in Birmingham.

Councilor Mitchell asked whether any figures were available on how much money the arena had lost out on, as it was late to enter the “renovation game.”

Ms. Paul stated she did not have those figures, but the Arena District had been very responsible about reinvesting in the facility over the years. Around 2012, there was a \$14 million investment from the City of Greenville and Greenville County. She stated, due to the facility’s age and the additional requirements of organizations, now was the time to act. Failure to do so would result in lost revenue.

Vice-Chairman Bradley stated he had been asked whether the County would be required to pay the bond if the Arena District was unable to do so.

Ms. Paul stated the intent was to use the same structure used in the past, where the annual payments were approximately based on the current interest rate. The Arena District had a very strong debt coverage ratio. She stated that a debt service reserve fund would also be established. In the unlikely event they were unable to make the annual bond payment, they could draw on the debt service fund. If, for some reason, they were unable to replenish that fund, it could affect taxpayers. Ms. Paul stated, based on current numbers, the impact would be less than one mill within the Greenville Arena District. There was precedent for the structure outlined, dating back to 2012; the Arena District had never defaulted on payments, and it was a great way to take advantage of lower interest rates rather than exploring other financing options.

Councilor Farmer stated he bought a house in February of 2025 for \$363,000; the amount of his tax bill for the Arena District was a “whopping \$3 a year.” He added he would be willing to pay five times that amount.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated her amount was \$5 per year.

Chairman Blount stated when the Arena District approached Council in 2025 for a bond, it sought a larger amount and would have resulted in a tax increase for district taxpayers. It was his understanding there would be no tax increase with the item in question.

Ms. Paul stated the fundamental difference was the amount requested had decreased from \$70 million to \$40 million, and the annual payments would be made by the Arena District, with no millage increase for taxpayers.

Councilor McGahhey requested Ms. Paul review the project funding scenario.

Ms. Paul stated the general obligation bond was not to exceed \$40 million. There was a request to amend the intergovernmental agreement, a tri-party agreement between the City of Greenville, Greenville County, and the Greenville Arena District. She stated that an agreement had been in place since 1996, allowing the Arena District to collect 2.3% of local accommodations fees, with those funds restricted to debt payments. Any funds collected in excess of the amount of the bond payment were to be remitted back to the City and the County. Currently, that funding was remitted once a year. The proposed amendment to the agreement would expeditiously remit the excess funding. The Arena District intended to issue additional debt for the project, based on capacity. That number was expected to be somewhere in the \$22 million range for the County. The County’s hospitality tax was restricted to tourism-related, infrastructure, and activities.

Councilor Shaw stated it was his understanding Greenville County H-Tax monies would be used to cover a \$100 million bond for the project, and A-Tax monies would be used to cover a \$40 million bond.

Ms. Paul stated H-Tax funds would be used to cover a \$100 million bond, and A-Tax monies would cover a \$22 million bond. The \$40 million was a general obligation bond, with annual principal and interest payments made from the Arena District's available revenue.

Councilor Shaw stated Greenville County had discretion regarding how much H-Tax and A-Tax could be used for the project. He asked how much would be left for other needs.

Mr. Kernell stated the County had about \$300,000 in A-Tax excess and that number would continue to grow each year. The County had never relied on the local A-Tax, and it had been put in place for the arena. Over the years, any excess was used for a handful of special tourism projects; however, it was mainly reinvested in the arena for events like basketball tournaments.

Mr. Kernell stated he could not foresee making any big changes to H-Tax funding. There was actually a bond in place with the arena that would begin a substantial reduction in 2028 and then drop off in 2029. The proposed debt would basically replace the existing debt service. He stated the County had financial advisors and bond counsel available to help structure it in a very good way, taking advantage of market fluctuations and changes in interest rates. Anytime \$6 million was spent in a year, other things would be impacted; it would be replacing about \$4-\$5 million worth of bonds, so the increase would not be that significant. Mr. Kernell stated the fund balance was projected to be about \$24 million by the end of June. He reminded everyone the funding had to be used for tourism activities. There had been some discussions about the potential use for another athletic-type operation, and the district hoped to be able to approach Council about that in the next 30 days or so.

Councilor Shaw asked whether the H-Tax was created for use by the Arena District.

Mr. Kernell stated the H-Tax was created for tourism. Over the years, it had been distributed throughout the County, and the arena had never received any of it. He stated the arena generated quite a bit of A-Tax and H-Tax revenue.

Councilor Farmer asked what areas of the County attended the arena the most.

Ms. Paul stated through Ticketmaster, they were able to pull zip codes and see exactly where tickets were bought. For 2024 and 2025, most tickets were bought in the Five Forks and Simpsonville areas (29681).

Councilor Long asked if there was a way to restructure to ensure the taxpayers were never affected if the district defaulted.

Ms. Paul stated, by definition, a general obligation bond was always backed by the full tax and credit of the Arena District. She was not sure if a general obligation bond could be modified in that way and asked Brad Love to comment.

Mr. Love stated it was not possible. The district's revenues were pledged; to the extent those revenues were unavailable, a debt service reserve fund was established. The amount of the debt service reserve fund was one year's debt service. If used, the fund was replenished over the next 12 months. When the County Auditor levied a tax for the bond, the money was in the account. Mr. Love stated there were mechanisms in place to secure ever getting to the tax level. But since it was a general obligation bond, it ultimately was secured by taxes.

Councilor Long asked if that had ever occurred in Greenville County.

Mr. Love stated it had never occurred.

Councilor Collins stated the SEC actually tried to rotate to give other markets the opportunity to participate. He asked if it was "all or nothing" or if there would be phases to the construction.



Ms. Paul stated construction would be determined by funding. There were priorities in the construction, and they intended to keep everyone in the loop. She stated the SEC had a 20-year contract in Nashville, and it was not rotated. Greenville had been the home of the Women's SEC Tournament since 2017, through a series of short-term renewals.

Councilor Collins inquired about the projected completion date for all construction.

Ms. Paul stated they were still working through phasing. She hoped everything would be complete within 2-3 years.



**COUNTY COUNCIL ORDINANCES**

- Authorize GAD to issue General Obligation Bonds
- Annual debt payments paid from Greenville Arena District operating revenues
- \$24 million spent on PayGo projects (FY23-FY26) with \$5 million planned in FY27
- Amend the existing Intergovernmental Agreement
- Authorize the County to issue \$100 million of Hospitality Tax Bonds

**NEXT STEPS**

- Conduct sound studies of surrounding neighborhoods
- Continue funding discussions with the City and the State
- Develop a construction timeline and phasing plan to minimize disruption to ongoing arena operations
- Continue engagement with our stakeholders
- Continue communicating with you

**Item (5) Greenville Arena District / Issuance of General Obligation Bonds**

**Action:** Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to approve the ordinance finding that Greenville Arena District, South Carolina may issue not exceeding \$40,000,000 of General Obligation Bonds in one or more series; to authorize the Board of Trustees of the Greenville Arena District, South Carolina to issue such bonds and to provide for the publication of notice of the said finding and authorization.

Motion carried.

**Item (6) Greenville Arena District / Request for Public Hearing**

**Action:** Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to approve the resolution calling for a public hearing to be held upon the question of issuance of not \$40,000,000 of General Obligation Bonds of Greenville Arena District, South Carolina and to provide for the publication of the notice of such hearing.

Motion carried.

**Item (7) Greenville Arena District - Intergovernmental Agreement Amendment / Accommodations Fee Revenues**

**Action:** Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to approve the ordinance approving an amendment to an Intergovernmental Agreement related to the County's Accommodations Fee Revenues among Greenville County, Greenville Arena District, the City of Greenville and an escrow agent; approving an amendment to an escrow agreement among Greenville County, the City of Greenville and an escrow agent; and other matters related thereto.

Councilor Shaw asked how the bond attorney and bond company were selected. He asked if RFP's were issued or if the candidates filled out an application.

Mr. Kernell stated those were professional services and were based on qualifications. Brad Love has served as the County's bond counsel for a number of years. It was different than procurement for goods and services.

Motion as presented carried.

**Item (8)**

**Hospitality Tax Revenue Bonds / Second Supplemental Ordinance**

**Action:**

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to approve a second supplemental ordinance providing for the issuance and sale by Greenville County, South Carolina of not exceeding \$100,000,000 Hospitality Tax Revenue Bonds in one or more series and the issuance and sale of Hospitality Tax Revenue Bond Anticipation Notes in one or more series, and other matters relating thereto.

Motion carried.

**Item (9)**

**Adjournment**

**Action:**

There being no further business, Vice-Chairman Bradley moved to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 5:26 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Regina McCaskill  
Clerk to Council