GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes
Regular Meeting
June 16, 2026
6:22 p.m.

Council Chambers
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*

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

Council Members Remote Participation

None

Staff Present

Joe Kernell, *County Administrator*
Ted Lambrecht, *Deputy County Administrator*
Jason Martin, *Assistant County Administrator*
Chris Antley, *County Attorney*
Regina McCaskill, *Clerk to Council*
Jessica Stone, *Deputy Clerk to Council*
Julie Wallace, *Administrative Assistant, Clerk to Council Office*
Bob Mihalic, *Governmental Affairs Officer*
Terrence Galloway, *Information Systems*
Hesha Gamble, *Assistant County Administrator*
Ronald Hollister, *Assistant County Administrator*

Others Present

Sheriff Hobart Lewis

Call to Order — Chairman Blount

Invocation - *introduced by Councilor Farmer* — Chaplain Kenya Parmenter

Pledge of Allegiance

Item (4) ***Approval of Minutes***

a. June 2, 2026 – Regular County Council Meeting

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to approve the minutes of the June 2, 2026, Regular County Council Meeting.

Motion carried.

Item (5) ***Appearances – Current Agenda Items***

- **John Slipke -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget
- **Sierra Feser -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Shaw amendment
- **Jeff Lawson-** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Shaw amendment
- **Aja Johnson -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Shaw amendment
- **Amanda Dee -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Shaw amendment
- **Michelle Shara -** appeared regarding Item 9.b. – Augusta Arbor II - FILOT
- **Theresa Mann -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Shaw amendment
- **Ana Thomas -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Shaw amendment
- **Storm Bruner -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Shaw amendment
- **Alicia Kay -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Shaw amendment
- **Gray McClendon -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Public Safety
- **Bennett Meares -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Shaw amendment
- **Margaret McGinty -** appeared regarding Item 9.a. County Budget - Shaw amendment

Item (6) ***Public Hearings***

a. Greenville County Library / FY2027 Budget Millage

A public hearing was held for the purpose of receiving comments from the public regarding an ordinance to approve the appropriation of funds for the Greenville County Library System for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027; and to authorize the annual ad valorem property tax millage levy for library purposes.

There being no speakers, Councilor Collins declared the public hearing closed.

b. Old Mill Estates Special Tax District / Millage Request

A public hearing was held for the purpose of receiving comments from the public regarding an ordinance to approve the Old Mill Estates Special Tax District Commissioners' request for an increase to its current ad valorem property tax millage levy.

There being no speakers, Councilor Collins declared the public hearing closed.

c. **Transportation Penny Sales Tax and Use Tax and Referendum**

A public hearing was held for the purpose of receiving comments from the public regarding an ordinance to levy and impose a one percent sales and use tax subject to a referendum, with Greenville County, pursuant to Section 4-37-30 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended; to define the specific purposes and designate the projects for which the proceeds of the tax may be used; to provide the maximum time for which such tax may be imposed; to provide the estimated cost of the projects funded from the proceeds of the tax; to provide for a county-wide referendum on the imposition of the sales and use tax and the issuance of general obligation bonds and to prescribe the contents of the ballot questions in the referendum; to provide for the conduct of the referendum by the Board of Elections and Voter Registration of Greenville County; to provide for the administration of the tax, if approved; to provide for the payment of the tax, if approved; and to provide for other matters related thereto.

- **Buster Greggs -** appeared in favor of the proposed
- **Liene Kukainis -** appeared in favor of the proposed
- **Malinda Smith -** appeared in favor of the proposed
- **Casey Schwager -** appeared in favor of the proposed
- **Lucas McDonald -** appeared in favor of the proposed

There being no other speakers, Councilor McGahhey declared the public hearing closed.

<u>Item (7)</u> ***<u>Consent Agenda</u>***

a. **Initiate Zoning Text Amendment / Open Space Residential Development**
b. **ASPCA Disaster Grant – Winter Storm Fern**
c. **Best Friends Animal Society – Return to Home Grant**
d. **Office of Justice Programs 2026 Special Attorney's Program**
e. **Community Project Application / City of Greer – Greer Relief Garden**
f. **Community Project Application / Dicey Langston Heritage Garden at Spring Park**
g. **Community Project Application / Dream Preparatory Academy Technology Upgrades**
h. **Community Project Application / Summer Day Camp Scholarships $2,116.00**
i. **Community Project Application / Clear Spring Fire & Rescue – Hose Replacement**

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved approval of the Consent Agenda items.

Motion carried.

Councilor Tripp left the meeting at 7:17 p.m.

Item (8) ***Resolutions***

a. Project On The Trail (Project OTT) / Textile Certification and Special Source Credit Agreement

Action: Councilor Collins moved for adoption a resolution to provide a certification pursuant to the South Carolina Textile Communities Revitalization Act (SC Code Section 12-65-10 et seq.) for certain property located near West Blue Ridge Drive and Old Buncombe Road, formerly part of the Union Bleachery, in Greenville, South Carolina.

Motion carried by a roll call vote of nine (Russo, Long, Blount, McGahhey, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley) in favor, two (Shaw, Collins) in opposition and one (Tripp) absent.

b. Project On The Trail (Project OTT) Special Source Credit Agreement / Joinder Resolution

Action: Councilor Collins moved for adoption a resolution designating and approving a project affiliate so as to allow the project affiliate to qualify for benefits pursuant to that certain special source credit agreement with Greenville County, South Carolina; and other matters related thereto.

Motion carried by a roll call vote of nine (Russo, Long, Blount, McGahhey, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley) in favor, two (Shaw, Collins) in opposition and one (Tripp) absent.

Councilor Tripp returned to the meeting at 7:20 p.m.

c. Greater Greenville Sanitation District Annexation – 641 Altamont Road / Request for Public Hearing

Action: Councilor McGahhey moved for adoption a resolution requesting to hold a public hearing to consider enlarging the Greater Greenville Sanitation District to include 641 Altamont Road parcel.

Motion carried.

d. Greater Greenville Sanitation District Annexation – 1080 Altamont Road / Request for Public Hearing

Action: Councilor McGahhey moved for adoption a resolution requesting to hold a public hearing to consider enlarging the Greater Greenville Sanitation District to include 1080 Altamont Road parcel.

Motion carried.

e. Greater Greenville Sanitation District Annexation – 1000 North Parker Road / Request for Public Hearing

Action: Councilor McGahhey moved for adoption a resolution requesting to hold a public hearing to consider enlarging the Greater Greenville Sanitation District to include 1000 North Parker Road.

Motion carried.

f. Greater Greenville Sanitation District Annexation – 106 Phillips Avenue / Request for Public Hearing

Action: Councilor McGahhey moved for adoption a resolution requesting to hold a public hearing to consider enlarging the Greater Greenville Sanitation District to include 106 Phillips Avenue.

Motion carried.

Mr. Antley stated there was an issue with the application package, and the applicant requested the vote not go forward.

Councilor McGahhey asked whether the issue was related to a trust and the need for additional signatures.

Mr. Antley answered in the affirmative and stated the item would need to be reconsidered.

Action: Councilor McGahhey moved to reconsider the item.

Motion to reconsider carried.

Action: Councilor McGahhey moved to hold the item.

Motion to hold carried.

g. Greater Greenville Sanitation District Annexation – Willimon Estates Subdivision / Request for Public Hearing

Action: Councilor McGahhey moved for adoption a resolution requesting to hold a public hearing to consider enlarging the Greater Greenville Sanitation District to include Willimon Estates Subdivision.

Motion carried.

Item (9) Ordinances – Third Reading

a. County of Greenville FY2027 Budget Ordinance

Action: Vice-Chairman Bradley moved for adoption at the third reading an ordinance adopting the County of Greenville FY2027 Budget.

Action: Councilor Russo moved to amend the proposed budget to include an additional 2% salary increase for Public Safety and Law Enforcement Officers.

Vice-Chairman Bradley asked Mr. Kernell where the additional funding would come from if the amendment was approved.

Mr. Kernell stated that decision would be up to Council.

Vice-Chairman Bradley asked if the County would have to raise taxes to accommodate for the increase.

Mr. Kernell stated spending in other areas would have to be lowered.

Councilor Fant asked about the dollar amount associated with the proposed increase.

Councilor Russo stated the amount needed was $2,289,914.

Councilor Long stated it was her understanding the County was close to the threshold that would affect its Triple A credit rating if funding for the proposed salary increase was taken from elsewhere.

Mr. Kernell stated there was a policy in place requiring the County to maintain between 25% - 35% of its revenue in the Fund Balance. He stated they were approaching an area he would not recommend they get close to. The Fund Balance was currently based on estimates; until they had “final, hard numbers”, it could go either way.

Councilor Long asked whether it would be prudent to assume the County could be placed in jeopardy in the event of an emergency.

Mr. Kernell stated certain issues could arise that would create problems for the County.

Councilor Long stated if the County were to exceed the threshold and lose its Triple A credit rating, it would affect current rates on everything it owed, as well as going forward.

Mr. Kernell stated it would absolutely impact the County’s interest rates. He stated he had a rating call with one of the rating agencies, seeking to reaffirm some of the road bonds currently in place. Mr. Kernell stated they reviewed a host of other economic data for the County to ensure its underlying Triple A bond rating remained in effect and the parameters were still being adhered to.

Councilor Tripp asked Mr. Kernell to confirm the final salary increases approved by Council on June 2. He asked whether the increases were 5% for the Sheriff’s Office and 4% for the remaining County employees.

Mr. Kernell stated Council approved a 4% across-the-board salary increase.

Councilor Tripp stated he recalled Council discussing an additional 2.5% for the Sheriff’s Office.

Mr. Kernell confirmed that amount was discussed.

Councilor Tripp stated he agreed Council should support its "men and women in blue"; however, additional funds may not be the only solution. Mr. Tripp stated he would be reluctant to support Mr. Russo's amendment.

Councilor Russo stated they approved a 6% increase during the last budget cycle; he was just trying to bring it in line with that increase.

Councilor McGahhey stated the proposed budget had already "blossomed out of control." The fund balance was very important; it was not just money sitting in a bank account. It allowed the County to operate year-round. Taxes were not collected on a regular schedule; however, the County's expenditures were fairly constant. Mr. McGahhey stated cutting into the fund balance each year put the County at risk of a financial crisis. He stated prior Councils failed to do things that would have ensured financial stability down the road. Adding additional funding without cuts and cutting further into the fund balance was a "horrible idea" for the long-term health of Greenville County.

Councilor Collins asked if the proposed amendment included emergency management.

Mr. Kernell stated it would include all of Public Safety: EMS, Emergency Management, the Sheriff's Office, the Coroner's Office, the Detention Center, and several other departments.

Councilor Shaw asked if the amendment would include the Solicitor's Office and the Public Defender's Office.

Mr. Kernell stated it would not, as those positions were considered clerical rather than front-line public safety positions.

Motion to amend was denied by a roll call vote of three (Russo, Shaw, Farmer) in favor and nine (Long, Blount, McGahhey, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Collins, Tripp) in opposition.

Action: Councilor Long moved to amend the FY2027 budget to provide continued funding for the Council Oversight Ad Hoc Committee by establishing a line item under the General Fund in the budget entitled "Oversight Ad Hoc Committee." The proposed funding would increase expenditures by $200,000 to $500,000, matching the approved funding from the FY2026 budget, none of which was utilized. The funds would be used to pay for in-process or new performance and/or operational reviews.

Councilor Long stated the Oversight Ad Hoc Committee had been working on the audit and was preparing to select the vendor. The decision would most likely be made within the next week, provided all the committee members were available to meet and vote on the issue. She stated the original $500,000 allotment had been in place for a full year, and none of it had been spent. The proposed FY2027 budget reduced the amount allocated for performance evaluations from $500,000 to $300,000. She stated as some of the quotes came in over $300,000, she was requesting a total of $500,000 be allocated.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman inquired about the current funding allocated for the performance evaluations.

Mr. Kernell stated $500,000 was allocated for studies in the current budget. Council had directed staff to complete a fire department study, which came in at $200,000. He stated Council did not allocate any additional funds for the study; therefore, $200,000 was used from the performance evaluation allocation. Mr. Kernell stated the $300,000 remaining in the current budget would be forwarded to the FY2027 budget and allocated to studies.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated she had no problem allocating $500,000 for studies; however, she was concerned about a standing committee having a line item in the budget, since none of the other committees did.

Councilor Long stated when Council approved the original $500,000 for performance evaluations, it was specified the funding would be used only by the Oversight Committee. She chose not to request a line item at that time because she believed the funds would be used exclusively for those purposes. Ms. Long stated she was never informed that some of the funding had been diverted to other uses. She stated, to ensure transparency, the money should be allocated to the Oversight Committee so it would not be used for any other purpose. Councilor Long requested her amendment stand.

Chairman Blount asked Ms. Long whether she wanted to divide her amendment into two separate amendments: one to refill the current funding and another to move the line item, or would she prefer to leave it as one amendment.

Councilor Long stated she preferred to leave it as one amendment. It was “common sense,” and she was trying to be transparent. Ms. Long stated she would not ask someone to take funding out of their budget.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated no other committees had a budget and she believed it would set a bad precedent to do so. Ultimately, full Council made the final decision on how the money was spent. Ms. Seman stated she was in favor of having the money available for the performance evaluations; however, she would prefer it remain in the existing line item.

Councilor Long stated she would not change her amendment.

Motion carried by a roll call vote of eight (Russo, Long, Blount, Shaw, McGahhey, Farmer, Bradley, Collins) in favor and four (Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Tripp) in opposition.

Action: Councilor Long moved to amend the FY2027 budget to remove funding for the Board of Tax Assessment and Appeals by decreasing expenditures for the General Fund Department of General Services (Section 1A) by $7,000.

Councilor Long stated the basis for her amendment was brought to her attention by a member of the Board of Tax Assessment Appeals. She stated there was a line item for that board in the amount of $7,000; the amount had varied over the years and had been as high as $10,000. Ms. Long stated she was told the board had never accessed those funds. The funding would come into play only if someone appealed their tax assessment and were unable to reconcile the situation with staff. She stated she had spoken with members of that committee and asked what they felt should be done. Ms. Long stated they informed her it should be removed from the budget; they were not paid a salary or reimbursed for mileage, therefore, there was no reason for it to be included in the budget. Councilor Long stated she was not taking the board's budget item; the board members were asking for the funding to be returned to the County's overall budget, and she wanted to honor their request.

Councilor Tripp stated Council was not responsible for setting staff budgets and questioned the purpose of the proposed amendment.

Councilor Long stated the committee members had requested the amendment. The Planning Commission did not have a line item, and its members did a lot more work than the Board of Tax Assessment Appeals. If one of the board members wanted reimbursement for travel or some other minimal expense, they could simply request it. There was no reason to have something out there taking up space in the budget. She stated she had spoken with the committee members, all of whom were appointed by Council. Ms. Long stated she had also spoken to Mr. Kernell about the issue.

Mr. Kernell stated he and Ms. Long had actually discussed another board. The members of the Board of Tax Assessment Appeals were entitled to a stipend for attending meetings. The amount allocated had been reduced over the years. The line item was a placeholder; if the board met, the members were entitled to the stipend.

Councilor Long inquired about possibly holding the amendment until she had time to speak with the board members and verify the information, as they had approached her about the issue.

Chairman Blount stated the item was currently at third reading. Holding the amendment would serve no purpose because the budget would already have been approved. He asked Mr. Kernell whether the budget could be amended at a later date.

Mr. Kernell stated the budget could be amended; however, the item could remain and would not be accessed unless the board met. He stated it could be removed and would remain in the fund balance; either way would work.

Councilor Long stated the board had approached her about the issue, and she was doing what they had requested. She planned to verify the information.

Councilor McGahhey stated if the item was removed from the budget and the board met, the board members could request the stipend through the Finance Committee. If approved, the request would be sent to full Council as a supplemental appropriation.

Mr. Kernell stated it could be done that way, or he could seek funding from another source.

Chairman Blount asked about any legal ramifications of removing the funding, as it appeared to be a state requirement.

Mr. Antley stated it was preferable to allocate funding for a potential state obligation. He stated there should be no issues if the board members were given the stipend in a timely manner. Mr. Kernell was trying to put a prudent plan in place, as the County had an obligation. He stated it was his understanding the Assessor's Office was getting closer to receiving some appeals. Mr. Antley stated the board rarely met.

Action: Councilor Long called for the question.

Chairman Blount stated Councilor Collins had requested to speak and he would allow him to do so.

Councilor Collins stated the County just completed an assessment and the Board of Tax Assessment Appeals typically did not meet until after an assessment year. He stated he was certain more appeals would begin coming in within the next three to five months. There was normally a dormancy period following an assessment year.

Action: Councilor Long called for the question.

Without objection, the motion to call for the question carried.

Motion to amend was denied by a roll call vote of three (Long, Shaw, Blount) in favor and nine (Russo, McGahhey, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Collins, Tripp) in opposition.

Action: Councilor Shaw moved to amend the FY2027 budget by (1) reducing Greenlink funding from $3.5 million to $1.5 million, (2) clawing back unused FY2026 affordable housing funding, leaving $50,000 for down payment assistance for five County employees, and (3) reducing funding for the Historic and Natural Resources Trust by $1,050,000, for total savings of $4,000,000 to be redirected to an additional 2% salary increase for Public Safety and Law Enforcement Officers.

Councilor Shaw explained each part of his motion as follows:

1. REDUCE GREENLINK FUNDING FROM $3.5 MILLION TO $1.5 MILLION

   Councilor Shaw inquired if Greenlink was really working for Greenville County. The County's proposed funding to Greenlink was $3.5 million, compared to about $1.7 million from the City of Greenville. Mr. Shaw expressed concern regarding the funding disparity between the County and the City, noting the City benefited more from Greenlink’s services. He stated he had heard from residents that the buses were underutilized, despite the need for transportation. Mr. Shaw referred to a “thought study” on bus ridership, which indicated it would cost roughly the same to buy a car for each rider as it would to fund Greenlink at the proposed level. He also suggested exploring rideshare programs.

Action: Councilor Tripp called for the question.

Councilor Shaw stated he was not finished presenting his amendment.

Point of Order: Councilor McGahhey stated the following, pursuant to County Council Rule 3(D)(IV):

"All motions except motion to adjourn, to recess, to close debate and delay on the table, shall be debatable. No debate on a motion shall begin until the Chairman has stated that motion for debate. Considering this, the Chairman must allow any member to speak on any motion if they so desire to do so. Each member shall have a maximum of five minutes to speak on the motion under debate, with additional time given by the Chairman's discretion."

Councilor McGahhey stated, in his opinion, Mr. Shaw should be allowed to continue.

Chairman Blount indicated to Mr. Shaw he could continue.

2. CLAW BACK UNUSED 2026 AFFORDABLE HOUSING FUNDING, LEAVING $50,000 FOR DOWN PAYMENT ASSISTANCE FOR FIVE (5) COUNTY EMPLOYEES

   Councilor Shaw stated he was not attempting to defund affordable housing. He stated the $1 million appropriated for affordable housing in the current year's budget included funding the County Employees' Down Payment Assistance Program. It was his understanding no applications had been approved for that program. If approved, each applicant would receive $10,000. Even if five employees applied and were approved, only $50,000 of the funding would be used. Mr. Shaw stated the funding was administered by an existing agency; therefore, there was no need to create a new agency to handle the applications. His proposal would reduce that funding by $950,000.

3. REDUCE HISTORIC AND NATURAL RESOURCES TRUST FUNDING BY $1,050,000

   Councilor Shaw stated when Council was in the process of approving the Historic and Natural Resources Trust, he received calls from across the State. Former governors called and asked him to approve it. While he was not philosophically in favor of using taxpayer money to purchase conservation, he realized there was some good in doing so. Councilor Shaw stated his vote was the deciding vote to put it into action and that was the reason he was "so sensitive about it." He stated when he mentioned HNRT's funding, he was accused of not being in favor of the trust's work; the program would not be in place without his vote to approve. Mr. Shaw stated it was a discretionary issue. During the previous year, the "animal control folks" secured about $1 million in private funding. He stated a rule was put in place requiring those funds to be spent, and he felt HNRT should be subject to the same requirement. Councilor Shaw stated there were enough people willing to donate to the trust, with more than likely millions of dollars over the years. He stated he did not agree with using taxpayer money for the trust. He stated some people were unable to pay their taxes and, if they failed to do so, the government would take their property.

   Councilor Shaw stated the motion proposed a $4,000,000 reduction in allocations that could be used to fund the additional 2% salary increase for Public Safety and Law Enforcement Officers, as proposed by Councilor Russo.

Action: Councilor Shaw moved to amend the FY2027 budget by reducing ad valorem taxes by 1 mill.

Chairman Blount advised Council had to entertain the original motion first.

Point of Order: Councilor McGahhey asked Mr. Antley and Mr. Kernell whether the two motions contradicted each other.

Councilor Shaw stated his intention was one motion that would reduce the allocations to Greenlink, Affordable Housing, and the Historic and Natural Resources Trust for a total of $4 million and allow the County to either reduce ad valorem taxes by 1 mill or allow for the funding needed for the additional 2% salary increase for Public Safety and Law Enforcement Officers. He stated it was an “either or” situation; it should have probably been separated into two amendments.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman suggested entertaining the first amendment to reduce Greenlink funding by $2 million, claw back affordable housing funding by $950,000, and reduce the Historical and Natural Resources Trust funding by $1.5 million. She stated if the amendment passed, Council could then decide what to do with the savings.

Councilor Shaw stated he agreed with Ms. Seman’s suggestion.

Motion to amend was denied by a roll call vote of two (Shaw, Collins) in favor and ten (Russo, Long, Blount, McGahhey, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Tripp) in opposition.

Chairman Blount advised Mr. Shaw to continue with his next amendment.

Councilor Shaw asked Mr. Kernell if the proposed budget included the establishment of a Public Relations position.

Mr. Kernell stated Council had requested the new position during its recent retreat.

Councilor Shaw stated he understood that during the retreat, Council had decided the position was necessary. He stated in talking with past Council Members, a Public Relations position was created years ago. The individual hired for that position, a “former TV announcer”, was now “an executive” and the Governmental Relations person. Mr. Shaw stated the position started as Public Relations for Council.

Point of Order: Councilor Tripp stated under state law, Council hired three people. He stated it appeared the proposed amendment included the act of “firing” an individual over whom Council did not have the authority. The position had already been created and could not be uncreated.

Councilor Shaw stated he was not suggesting firing anyone. His amendment referred to the addition of a new public relations position. Mr. Shaw stated the County already had a “very well-paid individual” in its Public Relations role and had added a Social Media position the previous year.

Mr. Kernell stated the Social Media position had been in place for at least eight years.

Councilor Shaw stated the Governmental Affairs Officer was paid a salary and his office was located on the "fourth floor executive level with all the big shots." In addition to that position, the County had a "social media person." Mr. Shaw stated a number of Council Members had their own blogs or other means of communicating with their constituents. He stated he was under the impression the County had an outside public relations person who was essentially a lobbyist; he stated that position may no longer be in place.

Mr. Kernell stated that position was eliminated approximately four years ago.

Councilor Shaw stated it was not that long ago, and the "records" could be obtained if necessary. He stated his point was to determine if the County needed another public relations employee, and he asked his colleagues whether a "whole new position" was needed to communicate on behalf of Council. Mr. Shaw asked which Council Member would instruct the individual on what to say.

Chairman Blount stated he was under the impression Council would not be in a position to tell the individual anything, as the individual would not be hired by Council. He stated during the retreat, Council decided the municipalities did a better job of messaging the public about their initiatives and what they were doing. Mr. Blount stated the purpose of adding the position would be to have someone inform the public in real time about what Council was doing, rather than three months after votes were cast.

Councilor Shaw asked Mr. Blount if he had a weekly newsletter.

Chairman Blount stated he would love for the entire county to subscribe to his newsletter. He thanked Mr. Shaw for the "promo" and added there were not that many people in the public who knew what Council was actually doing.

Councilor Shaw asked if the County needed a position to force to public to understand what Council was doing.

Councilor Farmer stated Council had ample notice of the retreat. He had offered his home and transportation to the retreat for his colleagues. Ms. Farmer stated the Council Members in attendance had agreed on the need for the additional position.

Councilor Shaw stated he did not recall Mr. Farmer's offer; however, his attendance at the retreat had no bearing on the creation of the new position.

Action: Councilor Tripp called for the question.

Chairman Blount stated Mr. Shaw had not stated his proposed amendment.

Action: Councilor Shaw moved to amend the FY2027 budget to eliminate the newly created Council Public Relations position.

Motion to amend was denied by a roll call vote of two (Shaw, McGahhey) in favor and ten (Russo, Long, Blount, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Collins, Tripp) in opposition.

Action: Councilor Shaw moved to amend the FY2027 budget to include guidelines to establish a separate millage for first responders' salaries.

Mr. Shaw stated the following departments were to be included in the motion as first responders:

- Detention Center
- Solicitor's Office
- Court System
- Public Defender's Office
- Law Enforcement
- Clerk of Court
- EMS

Chairman Blount stated he did not disagree with the concept of Mr. Shaw's amendment. He asked Mr. Antley whether it would be considered an actual amendment to the budget or something to be addressed outside the budget's scope.

Mr. Antley stated it would not be a budget amendment but rather something Council could work on outside the budget's scope. He stated he and Mr. Shaw had discussed the issue previously. Mr. Antley stated he had done some preliminary research in order to offer guidance going forward.

Councilor Tripp stated Mr. Shaw's amendment was not germane to the discussion as it did not appropriate funds.

Councilor Shaw stated he wanted to include it in the budget text, as it was the most important part. That was where all the confusion came in; it was not just numbers. The budget included priorities, goals, visions, and a host of other elements. He appreciated that Mr. Antley had begun researching the issue.

Councilor Shaw withdrew his amendment.

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to approve the County of Greenville FY2027 Budget Ordinance as amended.

Motion as amended carried by a roll call vote of eight (Long, Blount, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Tripp) in favor and four (Russo, Shaw, McGahhey, Collins) in opposition.

b. BRI Augusta Arbor II QOZB, LP (formerly Project Augusta Arbor II) / Fee in Lieu of Tax Agreement

Action: Councilor Collins moved for adoption at third reading an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee in lieu of tax agreement by and between Greenville County, South Carolina and BRI Augusta Arbor II QOZB, LP (f/k/a Project Augusta Arbor II) with respect to certain economic development property in the county, whereby such property will be subject to certain payments in lieu of taxes; and other matters related thereto.

Councilor McGahhey stated FILOTs served as the economic engine for the County. In the past, they were taken advantage of, resulting in some apartment complexes securing substantial tax benefits. With the election of the new Council, GADC was informed of the goal of bringing in high-paying, highly skilled, and technically demanding jobs to drive the economy. He stated Greenville County did not need more “$15 an hour Chick-fil-A jobs.” State law exempted new manufacturing companies from taxes for the first five years, with taxes eventually reaching 10%, the highest in any “red state” in the Southeast. FILOTs enabled the State to attract such companies by offering them a reduced tax rate of 3%-4% over a long period, and those companies began paying FILOT taxes immediately. The specific manufacturing project in question was required to generate high-paying jobs at 80% within two years to qualify for a FILOT; failure to meet those conditions would disqualify the company from receiving the tax incentive.

Councilor Farmer stated 80% of the fees those corporations paid were used for infrastructure; therefore, the County was getting something out of it.

Motion as presented carried by a roll call vote of ten (Russo, Blount, McGahhey, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Collins, Tripp) in favor and two (Long, Shaw) in opposition.

c. Greenville County Library / FY2027 Budget Millage

Action: Councilor Collins moved for adoption at third reading an ordinance to approve the appropriation of funds for the Greenville County Library System for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026 and ending June 30, 2027; and to authorize the annual ad valorem property tax millage levy for library purposes.

Motion carried.

d. Old Mill Estates Special Tax District / Millage Request

Action: Councilor Collins moved for adoption an ordinance to approve the Old Mill Estates Special Tax District Commissioners’ request for an increase to its current ad valorem property tax millage levy.

Motion carried.

<u>Item (10)</u> ***<u>Ordinances – Second Reading</u>***

a. Zoning Ordinances

Councilor Long recused herself from discussion and voting on the following item. She left the meeting at 8:12 p.m.

i. CZ-2026-026, Property of Mark Long, located at 500 S. Mountain View Road and N. Highway 101, requesting rezoning from POD to C-1. The Planning Commission and the Committee recommended denial.

Action: On behalf of the Committee, Vice-Chairman Bradley moved to deny the ordinance at second reading.

Motion to deny carried.

Councilor Long returned to the meeting at 8:13 p.m.

ii. CZ-2026-027, Property of Harry Reynolds of Harvest Field LLC, located at 107 Prospect Street, requesting rezoning from R-7.5 to S-1. The Planning Commission and the Committee recommended approval.

Action: On behalf of the Committee, Vice-Chairman Bradley moved approval of the ordinance at second reading.

Motion carried.

b. Land Development Regulations Amendment / Open Space Residential Development

Action: On behalf of the Committee, Vice-Chairman Bradley moved for approval at second reading an ordinance to amend the Greenville County Land Development Regulations to add new provisions for open-space (cluster) residential development in Greenville County. The Planning Commission and Committee recommended denial.

Action: Vice-Chairman Bradley moved to substitute a proposed ordinance, as presented in the County Agenda Packet, in place of the ordinance currently on the floor.

Motion to amend by substitution carried.

Action: Vice-Chairman Bradley moved to hold second reading of the ordinance until the corresponding Zoning Text Amendment ordinance caught up. He requested the Planning Commission review the ordinance at its next meeting and provide Council with a report and recommendations.

Motion to hold carried.

a. Transportation Penny Sales and Use Tax and Referendum

Motion: Councilor McGahhey moved for approval at second reading an ordinance to levy and impose a one percent sales and use tax subject to a referendum, with Greenville County, pursuant to Section 4-37-30 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended; to define the specific purposes and designate the projects for which the proceeds of the tax may be used; to provide the maximum time for which such tax may be imposed; to provide the estimated cost of the projects funded from the proceeds of the tax; to provide for a county-wide referendum on the imposition of the sales and use tax and the issuance of general obligation bonds and to prescribe the contents of the ballot questions in the referendum; to provide for the conduct of the referendum by the Board of Elections and Voter Registration of Greenville County; to provide for the administration of the tax, if approved; to provide for the payment of the tax, if approved; and to provide for other matters relating thereto.

Mr. Antley stated the item on the agenda had been amended in the Committee of the Whole, and those amendments needed to be ratified on the Council floor.

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to amend the ordinance to reflect the amendments approved in the Committee of the Whole.

Motion to amend carried.

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to allow for amendments at third reading.

Motion carried.

Councilor Fant stated it appeared Council "found common ground" in its amendments to the item during the Committee of the Whole. He asked his colleagues whether there were any specific things they wanted to hold for third reading.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated it was her understanding that allowing for amendments at third reading specifically was to clean up language related to changes in the percentage allocations among roads, Greenbelt, and Greenlink, and to double-check the language regarding whether Council or the Administrator would drive the conversation on the allocation of the funds.

Councilor McGahhey stated the projected revenue from implementing the penny tax was $1.1 billion, an estimate provided by the Department of Revenue, rather than $1.5 billion as reported in the proposed ordinance. Regarding the disbursement of collected revenue, 90% would go to the County for the road program, 7% to Greenbelt, and 3% to Greenlink. He stated the penny tax revenue would reduce the County budget by $5-$7 million.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated she appreciated the conversation about the item during the Committee of the Whole. She found it thoughtful and felt it was great Council could come together as a group to move the issue forward. She hoped they could continue to share the news and ensure the community was educated on the finer points.

Councilor Fant stated he echoed Ms. Seman's comments. He had anticipated some contention; however, the citizens of Greenville County should be proud of how Council had worked together on the item in question. No one got exactly what they wanted, but there was a willingness to find common ground they could all live with and work with to move the ball forward. He stated the discussion was a great exercise, showing how Council could accomplish things when they talked to each other rather than at each other, as they so often did.

Motion as amended carried by a roll call vote of ten (Russo, Long, Blount, McGahhey, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Tripp) in favor and two (Shaw, Collins) in opposition.

Item (11) ***Ordinances - First Reading***

a. Zoning Ordinances

Vice-Chairman Bradley presented for first reading Zoning Docket CZ-2026-029.

Chairman Blount referred the item to the Planning and Development Committee.

b. Simpsonville Fire Service Area / Millage Request

Councilor Collins presented for first reading an ordinance to provide for an increase to the operating millage rate levied by the Simpsonville Fire Service Area.

Chairman Blount stated the item would remain on the floor.

c. Simpsonville Fire Service Area / General Obligation Bond Issuance

Councilor Collins presented for first reading an ordinance to provide for the issuance and sale of not exceeding $1,200,000 Greenville County, South Carolina, General Obligation Bonds (Simpsonville Fire Service Area Project), in one or more series; to prescribe the purposes for which the proceeds shall be expended; to provide for the payment thereof; and other matters related thereto.

Chairman Blount stated the item would remain on the floor.

Item (12) ***Committee Reports***

a. Committee of the Whole

i. Agricultural Task Force Appointments

Action: On behalf of the Committee, Vice-Chairman Bradley moved to appoint Judy Langley to fill the Cattlemen's Association seat, and Ashley Trantham to fill the At-Large seat on the Greenville County Agricultural Task Force.

Motion carried.

ii. Open Special Application Period / Agricultural Task Force

No action was taken on this item in the Committee of the Whole.

b. Committee on Finance

No report.

c. Committee on Communications and Governmental Affairs

No report.

d. Committee on Planning and Development

No report.

e. Roads, Infrastructure and Public Works Committee

Councilor McGahhey stated the final draft for third reading of the penny sales and use tax would be ready soon. He advised everyone to be on the lookout.

f. Committee on Public Safety and Human Services

Councilor Collins thanked all the first responders for everything they did. He stated they were not forgotten.

g. Oversight Ad Hoc Committee

Councilor Long thanked her colleagues for passing the budget. The committee hoped to announce the vendor chosen for the performance evaluation in the near future.

h. Short-Term Rentals Ad Hoc Committee

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated the committee reviewed the first draft of the Short-Term Rentals ordinance during its most recent meeting. The ordinance was sent back to staff for refinement. She stated the next committee meeting would be announced soon.

Item (13) ***Public Comments***

- **Bruce Wilson -** appeared regarding the proposal of a County ordinance
- **Frank Tamburello -** appeared regarding Cell Towers
- **David Leveille -** appeared regarding Joseph Kernell
- **Johnathon Leveille -** appeared regarding Forked Tongues
- **Joyce Leveille -** appeared regarding Consequences
- **Miriam Leveille -** appeared regarding Rachael Bennett

Item (14) ***Administrator's Report***

No report.

Item (15) ***Requests and Motions by Council Members***

Requests and Motion continued

- Councilor McGahhey stated Council had just been disparaged by three speakers and he had no idea what they were talking about. He offered to meet with those individuals to discuss the situation.

- Chairman Blount stated he agreed his colleagues were not aware of what they were talking about. He suggested meeting with them outside of a Council meeting.

Item (16) ***Adjournment***

Action: There being no further business, Councilor Long moved to adjourn.

The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 8:44 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

____

Regina McCaskill
Clerk to Council