



**REGULAR MEETING OF FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, FEBRUARY 12, 2024 – 1:00 P.M.
CITY CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS
324 WEST EVANS STREET
FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Teresa Myers Ervin, Mayor Pro Tempore George Jebaily, Councilwoman Lethonia Barnes, Councilman Chaquez T. McCall, Councilman Bryan A. Braddock, Councilwoman LaShonda NeSmith-Jackson and Councilman J. Lawrence Smith, II

ALSO PRESENT

Mr. Scotty Davis, Interim City Manager; Mr. Benjamin T. Zeigler, City Attorney; Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager of Development; Chief Allen Heidler, Florence Police Department; Chief Shannon Tanner, Florence Fire Department; Mr. Michael Hemingway, Director of Utility Planning and Economic Development; Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Utilities; Mr. Joshua Whittington, Director of Utilities; Mrs. Jennifer Krawiec, Director of Human Resources; Mrs. Amanda Pope, Director of Marketing/Communications and Municipal Services; Mr. Adam Swindler, Director of Public Works; Mr. Kevin Rawlinson, Chief Financial Officer and Ms. Patrice Rankin, Administrative Coordinator

MEDIA PRESENT

Mr. Naeem McFadden with the Florence Morning News and Mr. Seth Taylor with the Post and Courier were present for the meeting.

Notices of this regular meeting of City Council were provided to the media and individuals requesting a copy of the agenda informing them of the date, location and time of the meeting.

CALL TO ORDER

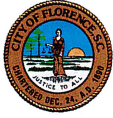
Mayor Ervin called the February 12, 2024 regular meeting of Florence City Council to order at 1:01 p.m.

INVOCATION

Mayor Ervin gave the invocation for the meeting. The pledge of allegiance to the American Flag followed the invocation.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilwoman Barnes made a motion to adopt the minutes of the January 8, 2024 Regular Meeting and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously adopted.



SPECIAL PRESENTATION

The City of Florence Tennis Center was recognized for receiving the USTA Southern Outstanding Parks and Receptions Department Award.

APPEARANCES BEFORE COUNCIL

Ernie James and Paul Pittman, Florence Tennis Association

Mr. Ernie James and Mr. Paul Pittman appeared before Council to speak on tennis in the City of Florence. Mr. James stated that tennis has grown significantly in Florence and nationwide for the last three decades. Mr. Pittman informed Council that the packet they received contains information regarding the 2023 Report of the state of tennis in Florence and programs presented by the Florence Tennis Association (FTA). (The packet is attached to and made a part of these minutes.) Mr. James informed Council that the FTA has agreed to coordinate a tennis program at Levy Park. The goal is to also expand tennis to the North Florence area. Mr. Jonathan Barch briefly spoke on the economic impact of tennis in the Florence area. Mr. James and Mr. Pittman thanked Council for their support of the Florence Tennis Association.

ORDINANCES IN POSITION

Bill No. 2024-01 – Second Reading

An Ordinance to annex and zone Neighborhood Conservation-15 (NC-15) 233 North Lakewood Drive, Florence County Tax Map Parcel 90008-01-003.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2024-01 on second reading and Councilman McCall seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2024-01 was adopted.

Bill No. 2024-02 – Second Reading

An Ordinance to convey a portion of the West Vista Street right-of-way to the South Carolina Department of Transportation, specifically fifty feet west from the intersection of West Vista Street and North Irby Street.

Councilwoman Barnes made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2024-02 on second reading and Councilwoman Nesmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2024-02 was adopted.

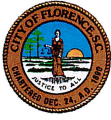
INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

Bill No. 2023-42 – First Reading

An Ordinance to rezone 1110 Oakland Avenue from NC-6.1 to NC-6.3, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 90114-08-004.

Councilwoman Barnes made a motion to pass Bill No. 2023-42 on first reading and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager of Development, reported this rezoning request was deferred at last month's meeting. The property located to the east is zoned NC-6.3 and neighboring properties to the



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north and south are zoned NC-6.1 with some commercial reuse, activity center and campus zonings as well. The applicant is requesting the rezoning to construct townhomes on the property. The current NC-6.1 zoning only allows for single family residential homes and a rezoning to NC-6.3 would allow townhomes to be constructed on the property. Mr. Moore reiterated that this is a deferred matter, and that the applicant has not provided any additional information.

Mayor Ervin asked if adjacent properties are single family homes. Mr. Moore stated that is correct. Mayor Ervin also stated that there was a public hearing with the community and the developer, and the community was not in support of the townhomes being constructed. Mr. Moore responded that there were mixed opinions regarding the construction of the townhomes.

Pro tem Jebaily stated he was hoping that Council would have received clarity from the developer, as this was the reason of the deferral from last month's meeting. This development has a look and feel of spot zoning, and he feels that the adjacent property owners may try to follow suit. He stated that he did not think this would be in the best interest of the properties along this corridor to approve this request. Having not received further clarity from the developer, Pro tem Jebaily said his concerns remain the same and he will be voting against the rezoning request.

Councilman McCall expressed his support of the rezoning request, although he wished the developer had further discussion with the community. Councilman McCall stated that new development in this part of town is always met with a lot of resistance. He stated that he understands the concerns, but he is still going to support the rezoning request.

Mayor Ervin stated that the purpose of community revitalization and neighborhood conservation is to preserve the character of traditional communities. This community is zoned for residential single family and she cannot remember an instance where Council has permitted townhomes to be built amid single family homes. She provided details regarding projects that have taken place in some of the City's catalytic areas. Mayor Ervin stated she agrees with Pro tem Jebaily and she cannot support something that may even appear to be spot zoning.

Council voted 5-2 against the motion with Mayor Ervin, Pro tem Jebaily, Councilwoman Barnes, Councilman Braddock, and Councilwoman Nesmith-Jackson voting against and Councilman Smith and Councilman McCall voting in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2023-42 was denied.

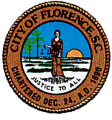
Bill No. 2024-03- First Reading

An Ordinance to amend the City of Florence Code of Ordinances Chapter 1.7 and add a new subsection providing that a person who violates any section of the City's Code of Ordinances with the intent to intimidate another person or persons in whole or in part because of the action or perceived race, color, creed, religion, ancestry, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, physical or mental disability or national origin is guilty of the separate offense of hate intimidation.

Councilwoman Nesmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Bill No. 2024-03 on first reading and Mayor Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion.

Mr. Scotty Davis, Interim City Manager, stated that a hate crime ordinance would create a separate offense and if found guilty and would be punishable by a maximum fine of \$500 or thirty (30) days in jail. South Carolina and Wyoming are the only two states without a statewide hate crime ordinance.

Councilman Braddock addressed Mr. Zeigler and asked how this bill relates to state law. Mr. Zeigler said the state has not acted on the bill yet, so local governments are able to impose their own penalties. If the



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house bill does pass and become law, he would then need to research the what status of the local enactment would be in light of the state taking action. The proposed bill will create a separate offense depending on if there is another violation of a separate city ordinance. Mr. Zeigler stated that if the ordinance violation is proved to be motivated by hate, then this can be added on as a second offense, essentially a penalty enhancement.

Councilman Braddock made a motion to defer Bill No. 2024-03 until the state has an opportunity to address this situation during the upcoming session. Councilwoman Barnes seconded the motion.

Pro tem Jebaily stated that his understanding that a deferral would only be until next month and he doesn't believe the situation in the Senate will be resolved by then. He suggested that Council move forward with the ordinance and if the state does take action with state law, the City can then revisit the City ordinance.

Mr. Zeigler stated that if the General Assembly creates a hate crime law for the state, then the question would be if a local enactment and statewide enactment can cover the same issue. Without researching the issue, he is unable to answer this question now. If the General Assembly acting invalidates the local ordinance, then Council would not need to withdraw the ordinance. It will be effective until there is a statewide enactment.

Following the explanation given by Mr. Zeigler, Pro tem Jebaily asked if Councilman Braddock would like to withdraw his motion. Following discussion, Councilman Braddock withdrew his motion to defer Bill No. 2024-03. The main motion is on the table.

Councilman McCall spoke in support of this bill and said he hopes the state can address this matter, as many hate crimes are happening all over the world and people need protection.

Mayor Ervin acknowledged that several community members asked Council to consider this matter and this bill is in response to the community's concerns. She stated she will support anything that makes the community a more inclusive society.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2024-03 was passed on first reading.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

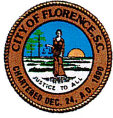
Resolution No. 2024-05

A Resolution to appoint Scotty Davis, Kevin Rawlinson and Victoria Nash as Directors of the Public Facilities Corporation.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2024-05 and Councilwoman Barnes seconded the motion.

Mr. Kevin Rawlinson, Chief Financial Officer, said this resolution is to replace the members of the Public Facilities Corporation. This is a not-for-profit corporation that was created out of the requirements of a debt service funding mechanism called Installment Purchase Revenue Bond (IPRB). Even though bonds are outstanding, the corporation still must exist. Previous members of the corporation included Randy Osterman, Kevin Yokim, and Chuck Pope and all three are no longer with the City of Florence.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) to pass Resolution No. 2024-05. Resolution No. 2024-05 was passed.



Resolution No. 2024-06

A Resolution to state the support of the City of Florence for the Clementa C. Pinckney Hate Crimes Act, H-3014, and to request approval of said Act by the South Carolina Senate.

Councilman Braddock made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2024-06 and Councilwoman Nesmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Senator Mike Reichenbach spoke to Council to provide an update of Bill H-3014. Senator Reichenbach informed Council that Bill H-3014 has received bipartisan and full support from all nine members of the Florence County Legislative Delegation. The Senate Judiciary Committee passed the bill out of the Senate last year, so the next step is for the bill to receive “special order.” Senator Reichenbach stated that Council could help this bill come to fruition by encouraging constituents to reach out to fellow state senators that may not fully understand or support Bill H-3014. Senator Reichenbach clarified that the bill is an enhancement bill on a violent crime and that it must be shown that the crime was motivated by terror and hate.

Councilman Braddock thanked Senator Reichenbach and his wife Charisse for coming today to provide clarity on H-3014. There is a lot of confusion regarding this bill and that he is pleased that Council and the Florence County Legislative Delegation all agree that this is very important to our state and community.

Pro tem Jebaily also thanked Senator Reichenbach for shedding light on Bill H-3014. He offered his assistance with reaching out to fellow state legislators.

Councilwoman Nesmith-Jackson thanked Senator Reichenbach for coming today to share information regarding H-3014. She also offered her support with reaching out to fellow state legislators.

Councilwoman Barnes thanked Senator Reichenbach for coming to provide insight regarding H-3014.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) to pass Resolution No. 2024-06. Resolution No. 2024-06 was passed.

Resolution No. 2024-07

A Resolution and Conditional Grant and Development Agreement to provide an incentive for the development of new housing in Historic West Florence as part of the ongoing Neighborhood Redevelopment Project.

Mayor Ervin said this item will be discussed in Executive Session. Without objection, this item will be discussed in Executive Session.

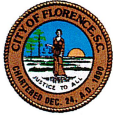
Resolution No. 2024-08

A Resolution to proclaim February 26 – March 1, 2024 as Montessori Education Week in the City of Florence.

Councilman Braddock made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2024-08 and Councilman McCall seconded the motion.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson presented the Resolution to Elizabeth Kahn, Director of the Montessori School of Florence and students.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) to pass Resolution No. 2024-08. Resolution No. 2024-08 was passed.



Resolution No. 2024-09

A Resolution of Recognition for the induction of Darryl Page into the South Carolina Football Coaches Association Hall of Fame.

Councilman Smith presented the Resolution to Darryl Page.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) to pass Resolution No. 2024-09. Resolution No. 2024-09 was passed.

REPORTS TO COUNCIL

Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Mr. Davis presented the packet of appointments to Boards and Commissions to Council.

Design Review Board

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to reappoint Kyle Gunter to the Design Review Board and the motion carried unanimously. Kyle Guner was reappointed to the Design Review Board for a term to begin immediately and expire on June 30, 2027.

Housing Authority

Councilman Braddock deferred his nomination to the Board.

Comprehensive Financial Report and Audited Financial Statements

Mr. Tracy Huggins of Burch, Oxner, Seale Company, CPA's, PA reported for the fiscal year ending June 30, 2023. The City had budgeted revenues of \$37,887,000 and actual revenues of \$39,835,000 in the General Fund. This resulted in a positive variance of \$1,948,000. Budgeted expenditures were (\$47,417,000). Actual expenditures were (\$49,073,000) leaving a negative variance of (\$1,000,665). Budgeted operating deficiency in the general fund of revenues over expenditures was (\$9,530,000). Actual operating deficiency of revenues over expenditures was (\$9,238,000), leaving a positive budget variance of \$292,000. 55% of general fund revenue came from property tax credits, business licenses and franchise fees.

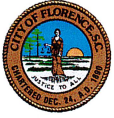
Governmental Funds: The unassigned fund balance in the General Fund is \$21,235,000 an increase of \$9,095,000 from prior year. This represents 43% of general fund expenditures for the year.

Enterprise Funds: Operating revenues last year were \$44,373,000; operating expenses were (\$32,839,000); net non-operating expenses were (\$16,502,000); capital contributions were \$2,811,000; total transfers out were (\$5,346,000); leaving a net loss of (\$7,000,504) in the enterprise fund.

Council thanked Mr. Huggins for his report.

Request to reschedule the March and November 2024 Regular Meetings of City Council

Councilwoman Barnes made a motion to reschedule the March and November 2024 Regular Meetings of City Council and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.



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Interim City Manager Scotty Davis stated that there has been a request to reschedule the March 2024 Regular Meeting of City Council to Monday, March 18, 2024 due to several councilmembers traveling out of town for training sessions.

Mayor Ervin stated that the November 2024 Regular Meeting of City Council falls on Veterans Day and city offices will be closed. It has been requested that this meeting be rescheduled to Monday, November 18, 2024.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) to reschedule the March and November 2024 Regular Meetings of City Council to Monday, March 18, 2024 and Monday, November 18, 2024.

MAYORAL REPORT

Mayor Ervin spoke of recent awards the City has received. She also acknowledged Mr. Scotty Davis as the Interim City Manager. Mr. Davis recently led a budget retreat with council and city staff, and it went very well. Mayor Ervin encouraged citizens to utilize the city's website, as well as the city's social media accounts to communicate with city officials and staff.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Business Development Committee, Chaired by Pro tem Jebaily

Pro tem Jebaily stated the committee received information and updates regarding the III Penny Sales Tax, capital road projects and infrastructure projects. He thanked city staff for their dedication, hard work and for providing information to council each month. The committee also received an update on the city's corridors and looks to bring a corridor study to council once more information has been received.

Community Development Committee, Chaired by Councilwoman Barnes

Councilwoman Barnes stated the committee met last month and discussed a wish list that was placed on social media. She thanked those who responded to the wish list and stated that the list is being worked on. Councilwoman Barnes also said the committee met with Mr. Ben Zeigler and is looking at ways to preserve the community's history. The committee also received a report regarding community services projects.

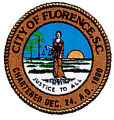
Marketing and Public Relations Committee, Chaired by Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson stated the committee discussed the progress of the city's app, which will be launching soon. She stated the committee has been doing a lot of engaging and educating through the city's Facebook account with "did you know" segments and encouraged everyone to visit the city's Facebook page to receive more information.

Finance, Audit and Budget Committee, Chaired by Councilman McCall

Councilman McCall stated the committee received a presentation regarding sports tourism in the City of Florence. The committee also revisited the CARE program to address concerns received from the community.

EXECUTIVE SESSION



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Mayor Ervin said Council will be entering into Executive Session for a discussion of matters related to an Economic Redevelopment Project, for a discussion of matters relating to an Economic Development Project and for a personnel matter.

Councilwoman Barnes made a motion to enter into Executive Session and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion. Council voted unanimously (7-0) to enter into Executive Session at 2:34 p.m.

Council resumed open session at 3:20 p.m. and took action on the following items:

Resolution No. 2024-07

A Resolution and Conditional Grant and Development Agreement to provide an incentive for the development of new housing in Historic West Florence as part of the ongoing Neighborhood Redevelopment Project.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2024-07 and Councilwoman Barnes seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2024-07 was passed.

ADJOURN

Without objection, the February 12, 2024 Regular meeting of City Council was adjourned at 3:23 p.m.

Dated this 18th day of March 2024.

Casey C. Moore, Municipal Clerk

Teresa Myers Ervin, Mayor



PRESENTATION TO FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL

February 12, 2024

- The Florence Tennis Association (FTA) is a 501(c)3 organization with over 600 hundred volunteer members. Its mission is to grow and develop the sport of tennis in Florence and the surrounding area. We do this by using tennis to serve the community.
- We manage or support dozens of major tournaments every year—from the professional McLeod for Health Florence Open to college, high school, Southern, South Carolina and local recreational events. Last year, tourism revenues from these events amounted to \$ 6.62 Million.
- We manage year-round adult and youth leagues with thousands of players, and provide a tremendous amount of programming for the public—including low-cost beginner clinics and low-cost and free programs for underserved kids.
- Since its inception in 2021, our Ron James Youth Tennis Program has served over 800 underserved area children. This program is part of the US Tennis Association's National Junior Tennis and Learning network, which was founded to combine tennis and education to motivate young people to succeed.
- Diversity is a major theme for the USTA and the FTA. Tennis in Florence does not yet look like our population, but we are pushing it in that direction as hard and as fast as we can.

- The FTA is funded primarily by tournament entry fees, member fees, accommodations tax funding, corporate sponsorships and grants. To date, over \$300,000 in grant money has gone directly into growing local tennis.
- The FTA works closely with City and County governments and area schools to make high-quality tennis courts available to the public. It played a major role in developing the Dr. Eddie Floyd Florence Tennis Center, and has on several occasions helped County and City officials obtain funding to refurbish courts. It has constructed a hitting wall, a storage building and changeover benches at public facilities, and provided scorecards and other amenities for numerous public courts.
- The FTA was named National Community Tennis Association (CTA) of the year in 2007, Southern CTA of the year in 2007 and 2021, and SC CTA of the year four times. It has been honored for community service by the Southern and State Tennis Associations, the SC Parks and Recreation Association, and the Florence Athletic Hall of Fame. FTA leaders are highly respected tennis volunteers at the national, regional, and state levels
- Working together, the City Department of Athletics and Sports Tourism and the FTA have put Florence on the national tennis map.





Florence Tennis Association

TENNIS IN FLORENCE

2023



January 15, 2024

Florence Tennis Association

REPORT ON TENNIS IN FLORENCE - 2023

January 15, 2024

Executive Summary

- Tennis in Florence is growing at a steady rate. This is true when we look at sports tourism and the number of major events coming to the Dr. Eddie Floyd Florence Tennis Center, and when we consider the large number of recreational programs and activities held at the Tennis Center and at other venues, public and private.
- The driving forces behind the continuing success of tennis are year-round good weather, the availability of enough well-maintained courts to support large events and regular recreational activities, conscientious management by the Florence Department of Athletics and Sports Tourism, and steady support from the Florence Tennis Association and the tennis community.
- An estimated 8,800 people played tennis in Florence this past year, including a record number of local residents. Players of all ages and skill levels took part in tournaments, lessons and clinics, adult and junior leagues, outreach programs, and professional, college, high school, and social matches. A number of national and regional events were held at the Florence Tennis Center and other local venues, generating \$6.62 Million in tourism revenues.

Facilities

- The Dr. Eddie Floyd Florence Tennis Center has 30 courts. In addition, there are 11 courts at Timrod Park, 2 at Lucas Park and 2 at Levy Park.
- Florence County has 5 public courts at Ebenezer Park and has requested bids for 2 more, as well as 2 at Greenwood Park just South of the City.
- With prior coordination, event planners can use 18 public high school courts, plus 8 at Francis Marion University, 8 at the Florence Country Club and 6 at the Country Club of South Carolina.

- There are 85 hard surface public, school and club courts. With this number we can recruit mid-size tournaments, although some of the courts are spread around town or in two-court complexes, which discourages some large tournaments from coming to Florence. There are only 14 clay courts, too few for most tournaments.
- We do not have enough centrally located courts to host very large national tournaments.
- There are enough courts for recreational players, although finding places to play can be difficult when major tournaments are under way.
- The buildings at the Tennis Center are adequate, but cramped (the FTA just helped build an additional storage facility). Most other area venues have limited amenities, and some require porta-potties for big events. For major tournaments, parking overflows the lots at the Tennis Center and causes congestion at Timrod Park.

Tournaments

- Florence is becoming an important site for regional and state tournaments, and hopes to entice national events. This can be attributed primarily to our excellent facilities and the strength of our tennis community. Another vital, but intangible factor is credibility: we have always done well as tournament managers and hosts, and both the Dr. Eddie Floyd Florence Tennis Center and the Florence Tennis Association are known and respected in tennis circles nationwide.
- The City of Florence hosted 29 tournaments with 5,330 participants. An estimated 4,400 of these were visitors who were in town for several days.
- These included 2 professional tournaments, 3 college team tournaments, 2 state high school team tournaments, 2 state high school individual tournaments, 2 pre-season high school tournaments, 2 state adult league championships tournaments, 2 USTA adult tournaments, 9 USTA junior tournaments, and 3 FTA social tournaments.
- Most tournaments were managed entirely by Tennis Center staff, FTA volunteers, or both. However, in some cases, staff and volunteers supported management teams from other entities.

City Programs

- The Dr. Eddie Floyd Florence Tennis Center is staffed and equipped to provide a full complement of services to players at all levels. With four full-time employees, three of whom are teaching professionals and five part-timers, it manages 45 courts, including 15 at other locations.
- During 2023 the Tennis Center provided regular individual lessons for adult and junior players of all skill levels. In addition, there were numerous group clinics for adults and four regular clinics for juniors at different ages and skill levels, as well as an Academy for advanced junior players.
- The Center also conducted two week-long summer camps for beginner and intermediate junior players.
- Small group adaptive tennis clinics were provided for individuals with mental disabilities.
- The Tennis Center hosts quarterly Match Play opportunities for high school and junior tournament players. Average attendance is 25.
- Contract pros also teach at the Tennis Center, and can be used to supplement the permanent staff when necessary.

Florence Tennis Association Programs

- An all-volunteer non-profit organization, the FTA has almost 600 members and its programs bring the benefits of tennis to thousands of local residents and visitors. It manages a number of tournaments, the USTA Adult Leagues, and a Junior Team Tennis league. It also offers beginner programs for adults, social events, Cardio and Triples Tennis, and an outreach program for under-served youth.
- USTA Adult Leagues. Over 500 participants played in 477 team matches, which amounts to 3,340 individual play occasions on 1,603 courts. League seasons, which ran for approximately two months each, included Spring Men's and Women's Leagues, a Men's and Women's Combo League, a Mixed Doubles League, Men's and Women's Singles Leagues, and a Social League made up largely of new players.
- Junior Team Tennis. Just under 40 children took part in JTT, which is a competitive program with several age divisions for children who have a basic understanding of the game. This is a significant drop

from the previous year, and the program is expected to grow quickly in 2024.

- Adult beginner classes. There were 11 Tennis 101 classes, each 6 sessions long, during the year. They produced 87 new adult players.
- Cardio Tennis clinics. The FTA held 10 Cardio Tennis events in 2023, with 98 participants.
- Triples Tennis event. An introductory clinic was held near the end of 2023 with 27 players.
- The Ron James Youth Tennis Program. Free multiple-session clinics were provided to 480 under-served children. These included after-school programs at 5 Florence District 1 elementary schools, clinics at District 1 and City summer camps, programs at Boys and Girls Clubs and YMCAs, and Saturday Fun Days at the Tennis Center. A member of the United States Tennis Association's National Junior Tennis & Learning Network, the RJYTP targets youth who would otherwise have limited access to the sport. Its goal is to improve lives through tennis and education.

College Tennis

- The Francis Marion University Men's and Women's teams have 26 student-athletes from 13 countries. In 2023, they played in 25 matches and 3 tournaments.
- Three collegiate tournaments, including the Conference Carolinas Championships, were held in Florence in 2023.
- FMU players participate frequently in community tennis events.

High School Tennis

- All three public high schools had varsity and junior varsity boys' and girls' teams. There were approximately 40 players in each program—a total of 120 for the three schools.
- Private high schools also fielded tennis teams—boys' and girls' at Trinity, and girls' at Florence Christian, Kings Academy and All Saints—adding another 80 to 100 kids.

- Typically, high school seasons include 20 dual team matches and up to 3 tournaments. High school team matches are composed of 5 to 6 individual matches. Conservatively, local high schools played over 230 team matches and at least 1,200 individual matches in 2023.

Other Recreational Play

- The Florence Country Club maintained an active instructional and social tennis program and entered several teams in the Pee Dee Adult Leagues.
- The Country Club of South Carolina tennis program was largely dormant in 2023.
- Florence County conducted instructional and recreational tennis at several sites, including Ebenezer Park on the Western edge of Florence. Several Ebenezer teams competed in the Pee Dee Adult Leagues.
- A significant number of individuals, families and social groups played recreational tennis at public and private venues—a conservative estimate is that at least 2,000 people played recreational tennis on their own.

Economic Impact.

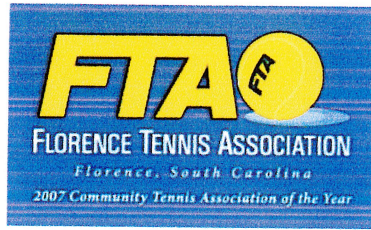
- Tennis generated \$6.62 Million in tourism revenues in 2023, almost half of the amount brought in by all sports.
- During 2023, the FTA received grants totaling \$25,230,51, with \$20,250 earmarked for the Ron James Youth Tennis Program. Over the past 20 years, FTA grant revenue has exceeded \$300,000, all of which has gone back into community tennis.
- Area businesses invested an over \$60,000 in sponsorship, marketing and public awareness funds in tournaments or other events, or in direct support of the FTA and its programs. Sponsorship for the McLeod for Health Florence Open women's professional tournament added another \$32,000, and included sponsorship grants from USTA Southern, USTA South Carolina, and the FTA.
- The FTA received 2023 Accommodations Tax Awards of \$14,643.39 from the City of Florence and \$2,310.00 from Florence County.

Recognition

- Since the construction of the Dr. Eddie Floyd Florence Tennis Center, our community has gained a reputation as one of the South's tennis hot spots. The City Department of Athletics and Sports Tourism was recently honored as the USTA Southern Parks & Recreation Department of the year for 2023. Earlier, the Dr. Eddie Floyd Tennis Center was named Southern and SC Member Organization of the Year in 2014, and selected as a USTA National Outstanding Tennis Facility in 2022 and a USTA Premier Facility in 2023. It received a Ten-Year Tournament Award from the USTA Pro Circuit in 2023.
- The FTA has helped put Florence on the national tennis map. It was named USTA National Community Tennis Association of the Year in 2007, Southern CTA of the Year in 2021, and SC CTA of the Year in 2004, 2007, and 2013, and won the USTA South Carolina Cam Littlejohn Community Service Award in 2008. Its Boys and Girls High School Tournaments claimed the USTA South Carolina Jim Russell Junior Tournament of the Year Award for in 2016. In addition, the FTA has been recognized for community service by the state Recreation and Parks Association and the Florence Athletic Hall of Fame, and in 2021 the Florence City Council issued a proclamation commending the Ron James Youth Tennis Program. FTA leaders have been asked to speak on community development, diversity, and advocacy at national, Southern and state meetings and conferences.
- Florence is well known in tennis circles in part because tennis volunteers from the FTA have been exceptionally active at the national sectional and state levels for many years. In the past ten years, the FTA has produced 2 USTA committee members; 2 USTA Southern Section Board members and 7 committee chairs or members; 2 USTA South Carolina Presidents, 8 Board members and 29 committee chairs or members. There have also been 3 Southern Tennis Foundation Board members, 2 South Carolina Tennis Patrons Foundation Chairs and 5 Board members, and 3 Florence Area Sports Council Chairs. In addition, FTA volunteers have won every volunteer leadership and service award available at the Southern and state levels. The South Carolina Tennis Hall of Fame contains 2 Florence residents.

Community Value of Tennis

- The value of tennis extends far beyond the dollars and cents it brings into our community. It is demonstrably America's best health and fitness sport, providing both physical conditioning and cardiovascular exercise, and players tend to be healthier than their contemporaries. On average they live 9.7 years longer than other American adults, and significantly longer than people who play any other popular sport.
- Tennis can be played into and well past middle age. In fact, for most players, it is a "sport for a lifetime".
- With its focus on friendly competition and team play, tennis makes it easy to meet new people and make lifelong friends. Its social aspects make it great for relaxation, stress-relief, and quick decompression.
- Everyone is welcome. Lessons are readily available for beginners and there are tennis programs for people of all ages and all levels of ability, including those who are mentally or physically challenged.
- Compared to most sports, the equipment is inexpensive and there are plenty of public courts. In fact, some 80% of American tennis is played in public parks.
- Tennis emphasizes fair play and good sportsmanship. Young players are trained to treat teammates and opponents with respect and "in your face" behavior is not tolerated.
- Students who play tennis regularly, including those from disadvantaged backgrounds, are healthier, do better socially and academically, and have better high school graduation and college acceptance rates than their peers.
- All of these factors explain why tennis is growing steadily across the country and in Florence. End of year 2022 statistics show a 33% increase in play since 2019, with a total of 23.6 million players in the United States. Estimates of 2023 and early 2024 growth, based on equipment sales and court construction, suggest that this boom is continuing.



FLORENCE TENNIS ASSOCIATION

RON JAMES YOUTH TENNIS PROGRAM

NATIONAL JUNIOR TENNIS & LEARNING



**BACKGROUND INFORMATION
FOR THE FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL
FEBRUARY 12, 2024**



Ron James Youth Tennis Program

Program Structure

- The Ron James Youth Tennis Program was created in 2021 to provide tennis instruction and academic assistance to under-served youth in Florence, South Carolina and the surrounding communities. To date, over 800 children between the ages of 6 and 18 have taken part in the program.
- The RJYTP is currently a subsidiary of the all-volunteer, 501(c)3 Florence Tennis Association (FTA) and a member of the United States Tennis Association (USTA) National Junior Tennis and Learning (NJTL) network.
- Within three years we hope to convert the program into a separate non-profit organization. As a first step in this direction, the RJYTP will form its own community-based Board of Directors in November of 2023. This Board will assume all normal Board functions, including governance, fiscal oversight and representational responsibility, while relying on the FTA for continued support.
- The program is funded by grants and local donations. Over the past three years, the RJYTP has received grants from the USTA Foundation, USTA Southern, and the South Carolina Tennis Patrons Foundation. It has also benefited from annual contributions from the FTA and the City of Florence Athletics and Sports Tourism Department, and from the work of its volunteer Fundraising Committee, which is made up of Florence area business leaders. It receives significant pro bono support from the Florence Tennis Center in the form of court usage, meeting space, equipment, and

technical assistance. To date, grants have totaled over \$60,000 and donations over \$17,300.

- The most significant expense is staffing, with smaller amounts for equipment and supplies. We pay part-time tennis pros and a part-time Administrative Coordinator at the prevailing local hourly rates. Of course, we use as many volunteers as possible, and we have put several of them through USTA Community Coaches Courses. Three of us recently completed Level 1 Coaches training and are certified by the Professional Tennis Registry (PTR) to work with children. Over the first three years, incomes have outpaced expenses, allowing us to build a small reserve fund.
- The RJYTP is named for Ron James, a retired educator and tennis professional who managed youth tennis programs for the City of Florence and the FTA and coached the Wilson High School tennis teams. Mr. James, who was loved and respected by everyone in the tennis community, died unexpectedly in 2019.

Tennis

- The RJYTP began on-court tennis instruction during the summer of 2021 and has since provided over 50 after-school, weekend and summer programs. Teaching is done in small-group clinics conducted by certified tennis professionals and trained volunteers using USTA-approved, age-appropriate curricula and equipment. Adults who work directly with children must pass the USTA Safe Play course and background check.
- Clinics are provided to participating youth without cost. We also provide youth racquets and all other necessary equipment.
- Initially, clinics were held at the Dr. Eddie Floyd Florence Tennis Center. However, Covid made that difficult. The RJYTP worked initially with the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Pee Dee and Girls University, but Girls University was forced out of business by the pandemic and the Florence Boys and Girls Club has been unable to provide transportation for months. The Boys and Girls Club and the City of Florence After-School Centers want to resume

lessons at the Tennis Center as soon as their current transportation issues are resolved.

- In April of 2022, the RJYTP began a partnership with Florence School District 1's Extended Day Academy, which serves approximately 560 youngsters at 14 middle and elementary schools. This collaborative program, which features both after-school and summer sessions, is ongoing and has already impacted 11 elementary schools—typically with 16 clinics per school spread over four to eight weeks.
- We also have a partnership with the City of Florence Parks and Recreation Division, which manages after-school youth programs at a number of City Parks. This past summer, we conducted tennis sessions as part of their summer camp. In addition, we worked with the City of Florence, the Florence Tennis Association, and USTA SC to erect fencing around two courts at Levy Park so we can teach after-school clinics at that site. We are pushing for courts at Lola Jones Park or the old Williams Middle School to give us access to another high-density, low-income neighborhood.
- In September 2022, the RJYTP initiated its first regional program with the Hartsville, SC Boys and Girls Club, which is part of the Boys and Girls Clubs of the Pee Dee. Since that time, we have conducted regular training at several other locations in Hartsville and Darlington, including YMCAs, the Darlington Boys and Girls Club and Butler Academy, typically using mini-nets in gyms. We would like to reach out to other Pee Dee Region communities, and are looking for teaching pros in to represent us their home towns.
- In the fall of 2022, we began to hold periodic Saturday Fun Days at the Tennis Center. These are 150-minute trainings that feature drills. Competition, games, and a refreshment break—with the emphasis on fun. Several months ago, when we noticed parents sitting around watching their kids, we began to include adult beginner training, a move that has produced quite a few new players, including some Tennis 101 and league participants. Not coincidentally, some of our most committed kids come from these new tennis families.

- Even though we provide youth racquets for all program participants, we recently started selling new racquets at cost (\$10) to children or other family members. We do this because we know that a family with its own racquets is more likely to stick with the sport. One long-term goal is to give each child a racquet as a graduation gift when he or she completes a course. In addition, we make sure participating families know that they are welcome at all public tennis courts and that the Tennis Center staff will give them loaner racquets and balls on request.

Florence Tennis Association

- The program's parent organization, the FTA, has worked with the City of Florence, Florence County, local tennis pros, businesses, and schools on many projects over the years. An all-volunteer entity managed by a volunteer Board of Directors, the FTA is a registered Community Tennis Association (CTA) chartered as a 501(c)3 organization. As a parent organization, the FTA has given the RJYTP strong and experienced oversight, reliable financial management, enhanced media and social media capacity, D&O and liability insurance and 501(c)3 status.
- One of the nation's strongest Community Tennis Associations, the FTA was national CTA of the Year in 2007 and Southern CTA of the Year in 2021, and has been South Carolina CTA of the year three times since 2004. It won the USTA SC Community Service Award in 2008 and the Southern Community Service Award in 2009, and has been recognized for community service by the SC Recreation and Parks Association and the Florence Athletic Hall of Fame. In March of 2021, the Florence City Council issued a Resolution supporting the Ron James Youth Tennis Program.
- Many FTA members have been tennis volunteers at the state, southern and national levels. In fact, the founders of the RJYTP, Ernie James and Paul Pittman, are FTA Board members and Past Presidents, who have also served as USTA South Carolina Presidents and on the USTA Southern Board and USTA Committees.

- Through its tournaments, training programs, and other activities. The FTA has brought the Florence area nationwide recognition, millions of dollars in tourism revenues and over \$300,000 in tennis facility and program grants.

National Junior Tennis and Learning

- NJTL is a national program founded over 50 years ago by Arthur Ashe and his friends to help children by using tennis to spur academic improvement. Shortly after it was founded the RJYTP sought and obtained membership in the USTA's National Junior Tennis and Learning Network, which oversees and supports over 300 chapters across the country.
- The hallmark of NJTL programs is blending tennis and education to improve academic outcomes. Each of our Florence area partner organizations has an academic enrichment program, but plans call for the RJYTP to develop its own teaching assets within three years. Funds have been set aside for part-time teachers, computers, and online curricula (STEM, English Language, Health and Wellness, and SEL), which will be selected in collaboration with partner organizations.
- Longitudinal studies of NJTL chapters across the country indicate that linking tennis and academic work produces improved academic outcomes in grades K-12 and boosts high school graduation and college acceptance rates. In addition, tennis is an exceptional vehicle for teaching sportsmanship and teamwork. It has been rated the healthiest recreational activity in America, is relatively inexpensive, and can be enjoyed for a lifetime.

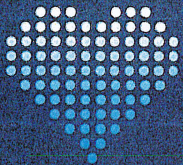
Additional Information is available on Request

- Contact Ernie James at ej.tennis@outlook.com or Paul Pittman at pmpittman@gmail.com or 843-667-9804.

LONG LIVE TENNIS

FOR THOSE WHO TENNIS LIVE LONGER

TENNIS INDUSTRY UNITED



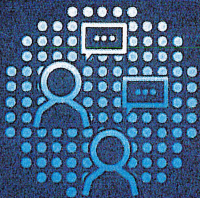
HEALTHY HEART

Playing just 3 hours/week will reduce your risk of cardiovascular disease by 56%.



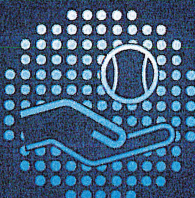
SMASH STRESS

Playing Tennis promotes physical, mental, social, and emotional health which can help with managing stress.



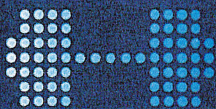
STAY SOCIAL

Tennis helps build and keep friendships and social interactions that enhance well-being and happiness.



IMPROVE YOUR COORDINATION

Playing tennis uses skills that all contribute to good hand-eye coordination and reaction time. Plus, improve your agility and balance.



GET FIT

Playing tennis 150 minutes a week meets global exercise recommendations and increases fitness levels.

To learn more about the amazing benefits of tennis, visit

[TENNISINDUSTRYUNITED.COM/HEALTHBENEFITS](https://www.tennisindustryunited.com/healthbenefits)

Endorsed by the USTA Sports Science Committee.

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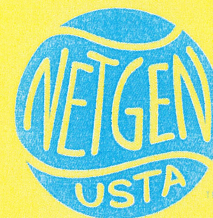
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SMASHING BENEFITS OF TENNIS!

THE AMAZING HEALTH BENEFITS OF TENNIS



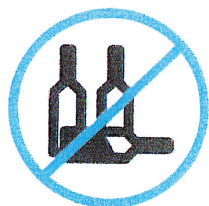
GOOD GRADES

Tennis requires alertness and tactical thinking, which may generate new connections between nerves in the brain, promoting a lifetime of continued brain development. 48% of youth tennis players have an “A” average and spend more time studying.



COLLEGE BOUND

81% of youth tennis players say they will attend college.



LESS RISKY BEHAVIORS

Youth players report less drinking and cigarette smoking.



PHYSICALLY ACTIVE

Kids who play tennis are less likely to be overweight. They are more likely to gain physical skills that can keep them active for a lifetime.



STRATEGIC PROBLEM SOLVING

Tennis players use geometry and physics principles to evaluate angles to get the best result. This application of knowledge improves problem-solving off the court.



SELF-CONFIDENCE

Tennis players exhibit higher self-esteem and optimism than other athletes or non-athletes. Tennis players show lower tension, anger, and depression, too.

To learn more about the amazing benefits of tennis, visit

TENNISINDUSTRYUNITED.COM/HEALTHBENEFITS

TENNIS INDUSTRY UNITED



Endorsed by the USTA Sports Science Committee.

2013 USTA Study-Foundation

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