

**REGULAR MEETING OF FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, JUNE 10, 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, City Manager; Mr. Benjamin T. Zeigler, City Attorney; Mrs. Casey Moore, Municipal Clerk; Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager of Development; Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Planning; Chief Allen Heidler, Florence Police Department; Chief Shannon Tanner, Florence Fire Department; Mr. Michael Hemingway, Director of Utility Planning and Economic Development; Mr. Joshua Whittington, Director of Utilities; Mrs. Jennifer Krawiec, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Adam Swindler, Director of Public Works; Mr. Glenn Bodenheimer, Controller and Ms. Patrice Rankin, Administrative Coordinator

MEDIA PRESENT

Mr. Seth Taylor with the Post and Courier was 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

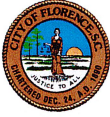
Mayor Ervin called the June 10, 2024 regular meeting of Florence City Council to order at 1:00pm.

INVOCATION

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

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to adopt the minutes of the April 29, 2024 Work Session, the May 13, 2024 Special Meeting and the May 13, 2024 Regular Meeting and Councilwoman Barnes seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously (7-0) adopted.



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SERVICE RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Adam Swindler, Public Works Director, presented Charlie Jernigan with a certificate of recognition for 50 years of service with the City of Florence.

A representative with Congressman Russell Fry's office presented Mr. Jernigan with a certified U.S. flag that was flown over the U.S. Capitol Building in Washington, D.C. in honor of his 50 years of service with the City of Florence.

Mr. Swindler presented Thomas Hatchell with a certificate of recognition for 20 years of service with the City of Florence.

Mr. Shannon Tanner, Fire Chief, presented Reginald Bridges with a certificate of recognition for 20 years of service with the Florence Fire Department.

Mr. Allen Heidler, Police Chief, presented Justin Head with a certificate of recognition for 15 years of service with the Florence Police Department.

EDUCATIONAL RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager, recognized Hannah Davis for obtaining the Main Street America Revitalization Professional certification.

Mayor Ervin and Pro tem Jebaily congratulated Mrs. Davis on her educational accomplishment and thanked her for her service to the City of Florence.

APPEARANCES BEFORE COUNCIL

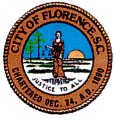
Ms. Suzanne LaRochelle

Ms. Suzanne LaRochelle appeared before Council to speak on community safety. Ms. LaRochelle spoke of the community and the perception of crime. She said she spends time researching how she can help the community and commended the Police Department for all they do.

Councilwoman Barnes thanked Ms. LaRochelle for coming before Council to discuss crime. She said crime needs to be deterred and began to explain her five points of a crime plan.

Mayor Ervin interjected and asked Councilwoman Barnes if she had a question for Ms. LaRochelle and Councilwoman Barnes said she was giving a statement. Mayor Ervin said Councilwoman may ask Ms. LaRochelle a question but statements should be presented outside of this period. Mayor Ervin asked Mr. Ben Zeigler, City Attorney, if political statements are permissible during this period. Mr. Zeigler said "Appearances Before Council" are not within the contemplation of Robert's Rule of Order; therefore, there is no rule of order that governs this type of interchange. Mr. Zeigler said it is custom for councilmembers to make statements, ask questions, et cetera during this period and it is up to Council to decide if this is customary or acceptable.

Mayor Ervin asked Mr. Zeigler if Ms. LaRochelle needed to return to the podium for Councilwoman Barnes to finish her statement. Mr. Zeigler responded no. Mayor Ervin said she would like for Ms. LaRochelle to come forward so that she may have the opportunity to respond to Councilwoman Barnes.



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Councilwoman Barnes said she agrees with Ms. LaRochelle and spoke of bringing back the Community Action Team (CAT) and more visibility of officers in the community. She continued to list the points of the crime plan to include a gun buyback program, Camp FEVER/Camp Carraway camp for youth, and holding businesses with high volumes of crime accountable.

Ms. LaRochelle said she is familiar with some of the initiatives Councilwoman Barnes listed but she would need to do more research to make a comment, as she is not an expert. She said she recognized the crime plan as part of her campaign and Councilwoman Barnes raised a point of order. Councilwoman Barnes said Ms. LaRochelle is here to address crime. Mayor Ervin asked that Ms. LaRochelle not refer to Councilwoman Barnes' campaign.

Pro tem Jebaily asked Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager, of the feasibility of implementing some of the initiatives in the crime plan, particularly community policing. Mr. Davis said the city currently has three officers who are a part of the Community Action Team. These officers are embedded in and have regular interactions with the community. Starting salaries for certified police officers have been increased to \$50,500 and the city is working to continue to increase this rate. Pro tem Jebaily asked if the city can grow the community policing aspect of the police department and Mr. Davis said yes.

Mayor Ervin began to ask Mr. Davis a question and Pro tem Jebaily asked that she hold her questions until after he has completed his statement. Mayor Ervin raised a point of order on the topic being discussed. Pro tem Jebaily said he is discussing the five points of the crime plan. Following discussion, Mayor Ervin said she will yield the floor for Pro tem Jebaily to continue his questions on the five points but reminded him that they are outside of Roberts Rules of Order.

Pro tem Jebaily inquired on the ability to offer incentives for police officers who agree to reside in neighborhoods to create more visibility and deter crime. Mayor Ervin raised a point of order and said livability was not stated in crime plan points. Pro tem Jebaily clarified that it was stated within the points. Mr. Davis continued, saying city staff would need to identify the areas and set a cap on the dollar amount of the incentive due to budgetary implications.

Pro tem Jebaily inquired on the feasibility of a gun buyback program. Mr. Davis said Chief Heidler has previously looked into this program and staff can certainly look into the program again. This program will also have a budgetary impact and a dollar amount will need to be set per gun.

Pro tem Jebaily asked Mr. Davis to provide a summary of Camp FEVER. Mr. Davis said Camp FEVER was initiated by the Florence Police Department and Sergeant Terrance Carraway was very instrumental in leading the program. The camp was held at Camp Sexton and officers would take the youth out to learn life skills. Mr. Davis said staff can also look into a similar program; however, due to the purchase of Camp Sexton, a new location would also need to be located.

Pro tem Jebaily spoke of enforcing code regarding businesses with criminal activity occurring and asked Mr. Davis and Chief Allen Heidler how enforcement can be addressed. Chief Heidler said the recently installed FLOCK cameras are helping to catch individuals involved in crimes. The rental registry also helps to identify those businesses that have not registered on the rental registry. Mr. Davis said the city received information from the county regarding 2,000 businesses that were not registered with the rental registry. The rental registry does not allow criminal activity and it can be used as enforcement.

Mayor Ervin reviewed the points and said the city has already looked at some ways to implement these initiatives.



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Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson said she noticed that all these initiatives would require more funding and asked Mr. Davis if implementing these initiatives would cause a tax increase. Mr. Davis responded no. City staff would determine how much funding would be needed and Council would direct staff to locate the funds in the budget. Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson asked the amount of the grant that the Police Department received to help with police incentives. Chief Heidler said the grant was received a number of years ago and he does not remember the exact amount. Mr. Davis said there are ten vacant positions for officers that could possibly be used for the CAT Team. If not, then additional positions would need to be added to the Police Department.

PUBLIC HEARING

A public hearing will be held to receive input on the City of Florence Fiscal Year budget 2024-2025.

Mayor Ervin opened the public hearing at 1:50pm.

There being no one signed up to speak, the public hearing was closed at 1:50pm.

ORDINANCES IN POSITION

Bill No. 2024-10- Second Reading

An ordinance to raise revenue and adopt a budget for the City of Florence, South Carolina, for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2024 and ending June 30, 2025.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2024-10 on second reading and Councilman McCall seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2024-10 was adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

Bill No. 2024-11- First Reading

An Ordinance to amend the Unified Development Ordinance regarding tattoo facilities.

Councilman Braddock made a motion to pass Bill No. 2024-11 on first reading and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Planning, reported city staff was approached about the confusion of where tattoo facilities are able to be located in the city. Currently, the Unified Development Ordinance classifies tattoo facilities under two land use designations: Tattoo Facilities and Specialty Uses. The proposed amendments clarify the classification of a Tattoo Facility by removing it from the Specialty Use category, but increasing the commercial zoning districts where it is conditionally allowed to align with Specialty Uses. Additionally, the amendments clarify signage requirements, create conditions for window signage, reduce the distance from residential districts, and incorporate applicable requirements adapted from the Specialty Use conditions, specifically, the requirement for tattoo facilities to locate 750 feet from each other and the exclusion of metal bars or roll-up doors to cover doors and windows. Planning Commission and staff recommends the proposed amendments.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to defer Bill No. 2024-11 to next month's meeting to allow Council to review the ordinance in depth and have any questions answered by staff. Councilwoman Barnes seconded the motion.



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Councilman Braddock said there is already a deferral process in place seeing that there will be two readings for this ordinance. While he understands Pro tem Jebaily's reason for deferral, this is an ongoing issue where businesses have been discriminated against due to an outdated stigma associated with tattoo facilities. Business owners have faced obstacles when trying to start a tattoo business due to the strict zoning requirements. Councilman Braddock asked what the recommendation from Planning Commission was. Mr. Dudley said it was deferred at the first meeting for staff to review, and then the proposed amendments were unanimously recommended by Planning Commission at the second meeting. Councilman Braddock said waiting an additional thirty days won't change much and expressed that the previous classification for tattoo facilities was inappropriate.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson asked for clarification on the security measures regarding metal bars and roll down security doors. Mr. Dudley said often bars on exterior windows and roll down security doors are signs of blight. These security measures are not allowed in the downtown area and the Specialty Uses category. Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson also asked for clarification on the 750 feet radius. Mr. Dudley said that tattoo facilities must be 750 feet away from each other.

Councilman McCall asked when this section of the Unified Development Ordinance was last amended and Mr. Dudley responded it was with the adoption of the Unified Development Ordinance. Councilman McCall asked Ben Zeigler, City Attorney, if this ordinance was passed on first reading and any additional amendments for Specialty Uses were made, would this require another reading. Mr. Zeigler said another reading would be recommended if a major amendment was to be made to this category.

Pro tem Jebaily withdrew the motion to defer.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2024-11 was passed on first reading.

Bill No. 2024-12- First Reading

An Ordinance to rezone 1401 Fairfax Road from OSR to NC-15, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 90029-01-005.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Bill No. 2024-12 on first reading and Councilman Braddock seconded the motion.

Mr. Dudley reported this parcel is the site of a single-family residence. It is located next to the Jeffries Creek floodway and the parcel was rezoned when the Unified Development Ordinance was adopted. The parcel is surrounded by Open Space and Recreation zoning and the parcel should have been zoned NC-15 initially. City staff is bringing this forward on behalf of the property owner to have the parcel rezoned to the recommended land use of NC-15. Planning Commission held a public hearing on this matter and voted unanimously (6-0) to approve the rezoning recommendation.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson asked how long the parcel has been zoned as OSR. Mr. Dudley said it has been since the Unified Development Ordinance was adopted in 2018. The zoning discrepancy was found during an appraisal of the home and the property owner contacted city staff. Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson asked if the parcel was zoned NC-15 prior to 2018. Mr. Dudley said the parcel was zoned R-1, which is the equivalent of NC-15, and it should have been carried over into the new zoning code.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2024-12 was passed on first reading.



INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 2024-25

A Resolution approving an amendment to the Conditional Grant and Development Agreement dated May 31, 2020 between the City of Florence and Styx Florence Land, LLC.

Mayor Ervin said this item will be discussed in Executive Session. Having no objection, this item will be discussed in Executive Session.

Resolution No. 2024-26

A Resolution to proclaim June 17-23, 2024 as National Pollinator Week in the City of Florence.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2024-26 and Councilman McCall seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) to pass Resolution No. 2024-26. Resolution No. 2024-26 was passed.

Resolution No. 2024-27

A Resolution to declare the month of June as Homeownership Month in the City of Florence.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2024-27 and Councilman McCall seconded the motion.

Mayor Ervin presented the Resolution to Mr. Cliff McBride, Senior Staff Attorney for SC Centers for Equal Justice. Mr. McBride thanked Council for acknowledging homeownership in the City of Florence.

Councilman McCall spoke on Council renewing the neighborhood revitalization strategy and said that Florence has made progress with ensuring affordable housing in the area.

Mayor Ervin thanked the Community Services Department for all they do for the community.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) to pass Resolution No. 2024-27. Resolution No. 2024-27 was passed.

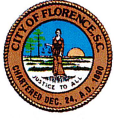
Resolution No. 2024-28

A Resolution to adopt the Community Development Block Grant Budget for Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2024-28 and Councilman McCall seconded the motion.

Mr. Dudley said the city was allocated a total of \$325,064 for the Fiscal Year 2024-2025 CDBG Budget. City staff has taken the recommendations of the community based on the public hearings for the following budget: \$65,000 for Planning and Administration, \$200,000 for Emergency Rehabilitation, \$40,000 for Down Payment Assistance, and \$20,000 for My Brother's Keeper. Last year's budget was \$20,000 less with similar allocations as this year's budget.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) to pass Resolution No. 2024-28. Resolution No. 2024-28 was passed.



REPORTS TO COUNCIL

Appointments to Boards and Commissions

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

Parks and Beautification Commission

Pro tem Jebaily deferred his nomination to the Board.

Resilience and Sustainability Advisory Committee

Councilwoman Barnes deferred her nomination to the Board.

MAYORAL REPORT

Mayor Ervin said the 2nd Annual Pee Dee Youth Day Initiative is scheduled for Saturday, July 13th at Barnes Street Activity Center. Mayor Ervin also shared that she graduated from the Midlands Diversity Leaders Initiative, Class 16, and she is also a fellow for the Riley's Institute of Diversity Fellowship.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Business Development Committee, Chaired by Pro tem Jebaily

Pro tem Jebaily said the committee did not meet last month. The committee will receive updates regarding the gateway projects, particularly the Lucas Street gateway at their next committee meeting.

Community Development Committee, Chaired by Councilwoman Barnes

Councilwoman Barnes said the committee will meet later this month and will continue to work on the community "wish list." The committee will look for funding for some of the initiatives that are listed on the wish list.

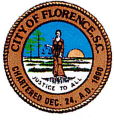
Marketing and Public Relations Committee, Chaired by Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson gave an update regarding the city's new AI bot. A soft launch for the bot is scheduled for June 28th at Florence After 5. The committee is working on several awareness campaigns to include recycling, the city's rental registry, and hurricane preparedness.

Finance, Audit and Budget Committee, Chaired by Councilman McCall

Councilman McCall said the committee reviewed the monthly financial reports for April 2024. The committee also discussed the glitch with the CARE program and Councilman McCall said this issue has been resolved. Additionally, the City of Florence has been awarded \$557,484.96 from the South Carolina Opioid Recovery Fund (SCORF) Board for the opioid recovery grant funding.

Councilman McCall made a motion to reopen the application process for the opioid recovery grant funding and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.



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Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Ervin said Council will be entering into Executive Session for a discussion of matters related to an Economic Development Project, for a discussion of appointments to City Boards and Commissions, and for a discussion regarding an Economic Development Project.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to enter into Executive Session and Councilwoman Barnes seconded the motion. Council voted unanimously (7-0) to enter into Executive Session at 2:28pm.

Council resumed open session at 4:06pm and took action on the following items:

Resolution No. 2024-25

A Resolution approving an amendment to the Conditional Grant and Development Agreement dated May 31, 2020 between the City of Florence and Styx Florence Land, LLC.

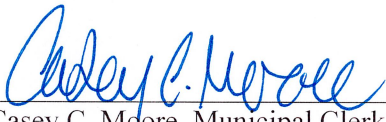
Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2024-25 and Councilman McCall seconded the motion.

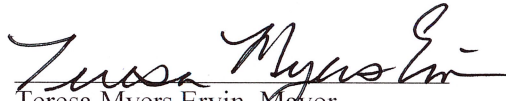
Council voted unanimously (7-0) to pass Resolution No. 2024-25. Resolution No. 2024-25 was passed.

ADJOURN

Without objection, the June 10, 2024 Regular meeting of City Council was adjourned at 4:08pm.

Dated this 8th day of July 2024.


Casey C. Moore, Municipal Clerk


Teresa Myers Ervin, Mayor