

**REGULAR MEETING OF FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, OCTOBER 9, 2023 – 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. Randall S. Osterman, City Manager; Mr. Scotty Davis, Deputy City Manager; Mr. Benjamin T. Zeigler, City Attorney; Mrs. Casey Moore, Municipal Clerk; 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; Mrs. Jennifer Krawiec, Director of Human Resources; Mrs. Amanda Pope, Director of Marketing/Communications and Municipal Services; Mr. Adam Swindler, Director of Public Works and Mr. Kevin Rawlinson, Chief Financial Officer

MEDIA PRESENT

Mr. Christian Smith with the Florence Morning News, Mr. Seth Taylor with the Post and Courier, and Ms. Aundrea Gibbons with WBTW NewsChannel 13 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

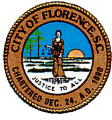
Mayor Ervin called the October 9, 2023 regular meeting of Florence City Council to order at 1:00 p.m.

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 September 11, 2023 Regular Meeting and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously adopted.



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APPEARANCES BEFORE COUNCIL

Reverend Hemingway

Reverend Hemingway appeared before Council to present an award for the Pee Dee Youth Day event. Reverend Hemingway thanked the City for the Pee Dee Youth Day event and presented an award of appreciation to the City. The event was very successful and attracted many youth and adults. Mayor Ervin spoke of the success of the event and thanked the Pee Dee Youth Day initiative board for their service.

Scott Garner

Mr. Scott Garner appeared before Council to speak on fentanyl awareness. He shared his story of his son's death due to fentanyl and how it has affected his family. He said over 200 people die a day from fentanyl, most due to accidental overdose, and it is noted as the deadliest drug this country has ever seen. Mr. Garner spoke of a plan he has to create an American Fentanyl Association born out of Florence to increase awareness of the dangers of fentanyl. He spoke of kicking off the campaign by biking from Florence to the Mexican border. Mr. Garner asked Council for their support on this endeavor.

Several Councilmembers expressed their condolences and spoke of their support on this endeavor. Councilwoman Barnes asked Mr. Garner to clarify what form of support he is asking for. Mr. Garner said forming a committee and having round table discussion on ways to make this a successful launch.

Debra Runion

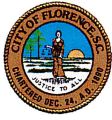
Ms. Debra Runion appeared before Council to speak on water fees. Ms. Runion said she attended the August meeting, at which time the proposed increases in water rates were five percent across City and County residents with the increasing percentages over the next several years. She said Council then voted to change the rates to decrease the City resident to four percent and increase the County resident to six percent. She said she thinks this is an unfair increase and the City resident does receive more services than the County. Ms. Runion then spoke in opposition of the round-up program, saying, once implemented, it is automatically included in your bill and you have to opt out of the program and it is another layer to generate funds. She also discussed Florence rates in comparison to surrounding towns. She spoke of several surrounding communities whose water rates were less than Florence. She then spoke of infrastructure money, saying all South Carolina counties received money from the state for water infrastructure. She spoke of the \$450,000,000 bond, saying \$20,000,000 of the first bond is to be used for water infrastructure to the new battery plant. In conclusion, she asked Council to reduce and revisit the fee structure for the City and County resident and vote no to the round-up program. Lastly, she spoke of the accountability of funds. She said there is a comprehensive annual financial report, but she was unable to find recent years on the City website and she said the reports should be available for everyone. Mayor Ervin clarified that the financial reports are on the City's website.

ORDINANCES IN POSITION

Bill No. 2023-32 – Second Reading

An Ordinance to rename West Kansas Road and name an unnamed road, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 90093-01-001.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2023-32 on second reading and Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion.



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Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2023-32 was adopted.

Bill No. 2023-33 – Second Reading

An Ordinance to rezone 619 South Church Street, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 90104-02-019, from AC to NC-6.3.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2023-33 on second reading and Councilwoman Barnes seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2023-33 was adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

Bill No. 2023-34 – First Reading

An Ordinance to amend the budget for the City of Florence, South Carolina, for the Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2023 and ending June 30, 2024.

Mayor Ervin said staff has requested that this item be deferred. Without objection, Bill No. 2023-34 was deferred.

Bill No. 2023-35 – First Reading

An Ordinance to name the pocket park next to 218 North Dargan Street, identified as a portion of Florence County Tax Map Number 90170-04-002.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to pass Bill No. 2023-35 on first reading and Councilwoman Barnes seconded the motion.

Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager of Development, said the pocket park is located next to Thompson Barber College and Ideal Funeral Parlor and it is proposed to be named in honor of Reverend William L. Thompson. Reverend Thomspon founded the first school for barbers in the Pee Dee area in 1989 and has been a longtime downtown business owner.

Planning Commission held a public hearing on this matter and voted to recommend that the pocket park be named in honor of Reverend William L. Thompson.

Mayor Ervin acknowledged the Thompson family and the family thanked Council and the City.

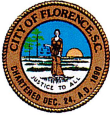
Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2023-35 was passed on first reading.

Bill No. 2023-36 – First Reading

An Ordinance to rezone a portion of 2000 Marsh Avenue, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 90043-02-001, from CA to NC-15.

Councilwoman Barnes made a motion to pass Bill No. 2023-36 on first reading and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Mr. Moore reported this parcel is the current location of a church and their proposal is to subdivide the portion along Calvin Circle into five single-family lots. Planning Commission held a public hearing on this matter and voted unanimously to recommend the rezoning.



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Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 20223-36 was passed on first reading.

Bill No. 2023-37 – First Reading

An Ordinance to amend Chapter 12 of the City of Florence Code of Ordinances to provide for the creation and administration of a Round Up program that would apply to a utility customer's monthly bill.

Councilman McCall made a motion to pass Bill No. 2023-37 on first reading and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Mr. Kevin Rawlinson, Chief Financial Officer, reported the proposed Ordinance will allow customer's utility bills to be rounded up to the next whole dollar. The difference in the amount between the customer's actual utility bill and the next whole dollar will be used to assist customers of the City's utility system who are in need of assistance. The funds that are collected through the program will be sent to a third party not-for-profit to accept requests, make the determination if the applicant meets the criteria set forth, and pay the utility bill on behalf of the customer. Special consideration will be given to vulnerable households with elderly individuals aged 60 years or older, disabled individuals, children aged 5 and younger and those households with an income below the current income limit of 120% of the area median income. The program is opt-out and will be applied to all accounts unless the customer requests in writing to opt out of the program.

Councilman Braddock spoke in support of the program and said Council is trying to mitigate some of the cost factors to the most vulnerable population. Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson, Councilman McCall, Councilman Smith and Pro tem Jebaily also spoke in support of the program. Councilman McCall said the program will take effect six months from now and the City will take the time to share this information and give people the opportunity to opt-out if they choose.

Mayor Ervin spoke of her support in the concept of the program, saying it is a good concept but she believes it should be about choice and it should be up to the customer to decide if they want to participate in the program instead of mandating them into the program.

Council voted 6-1 in favor of the motion, with Mayor Ervin voting against. Bill No. 2023-37 was passed on first reading.

INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 2023-41

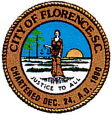
A Resolution authorizing staff to negotiate a grant agreement with the organizations in the amounts as shown in "Exhibit A" in compliance with the South Carolina Opioid Recovery Act.

Mayor Ervin said this item may be discussed in Executive Session. There being no objection, this item will be discussed in Executive Session.

Resolution No. 2023-43

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

Mayor Ervin said this item may be discussed in Executive Session. There being no objection, this item will be discussed in Executive Session.



Resolution No. 2023-44

A Resolution to authorize the transfer of \$500,000 from American Rescue Plan Act funds to the General Fund.

Mayor Ervin made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-44 and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Mr. Randy Osterman, City Manager, reported this Resolution is a follow-up to a Resolution that was presented last month regarding the reallocation of \$1,000,000 from the American Rescue Plan Act funds. Last month, Council authorized the transfer of \$500,000 of the funds and the remainder of the funds was sent to the Finance, Audit and Budget Committee of City Council for recommendation. Councilman McCall provided Council with the recommendation and made a motion to amend the Resolution to allot \$200,000 for the purchase of four police vehicles, \$200,000 to go towards rehabilitation projects and \$100,000 to go towards weatherization projects. Councilman Braddock seconded the motion to amend. Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2023-44 was amended.

Councilman McCall said the decision is based off balancing the needs of the community and public safety and was requested by both the Finance, Audit and Budget Committee as well as the Community Development Committee. Councilman Braddock also spoke in favor of balancing the needs of the community and public safety. He spoke of the number of applications the City has received for home rehabilitation and weatherization. He said it is important to equip the Police Department with everything they need, but it is also important to clean up the communities to inspire hope and revitalization. Councilwoman Barnes, Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson, and Councilman Smith also spoke in support of the amendment. Pro tem Jebaily spoke of the Council Committees, saying this is a great example of the Committees working together with staff to bring forth this recommendation that has been looked at comprehensively and he thanked Council for their dedication.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion, as amended. Resolution No. 2023-44 was adopted, as amended.

Resolution No. 2023-45

A Resolution of Recognition for the accomplishments of Oscar James.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-45 and Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion.

Councilwoman Barnes presented the Resolution to Oscar James. Several Councilmembers spoke, thanking Mr. James for his investment and contributions to the revitalization of downtown.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2023-45 was adopted.

Resolution No. 2023-46

A Resolution of Recognition for East Side Story.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-46 and Councilwoman Barnes seconded the motion.

Councilman Smith presented the Resolution to Ms. Sharmeen Sumter, Founder, and Mr. Joe Cummings, Co-Founder, of East Side Story.



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Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2023-46 was adopted.

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 deferred her nomination to the Board.

Public Safety Citizen's Review Board

Mayor Ervin deferred her nomination to the Board.

Aesthetics Advisory Committee

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to appoint Maureen Finger to the Aesthetics Advisory Committee. Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Maureen Finger was appointed to the Aesthetics Advisory Committee for a term to begin immediately and expire on June 30, 2024.

Parks and Beautification Commission

Mr. Walter Sallenger, Parks and Beautification Commission Chairman, and Mr. Barry Wingard, Veterans Park Committee Chairman, presented on behalf of the Parks and Beautification Commission and the Veterans Park Committee.

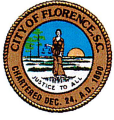
Mr. Sallenger reported the Recreation Services and Sports Tourism Department has seen tremendous growth in both a programming and facilities standpoint. Mr. Sallenger then addressed some of the recent achievements and advancements:

Arbor Day: Arbor Day will be celebrated on December 1, 2023 with a tree planting at the Florence Sports Complex. The City of Florence has been recognized by the Arbor Day Foundation as a Tree City USA for the 43rd consecutive year.

Parks: Most playground equipment at the parks has been replaced. Mr. Sallenger said they are hopeful all the funds come to fruition for the Levy Park project; however, they are asking that the funds already secured be used for the Levy Park area if not.

Trails: The extension of the rail trail to the Soccer Complex is moving forward thanks to the collaboration of the land donors.

Programming: Afterschool and teen programs continue to provide fun and engaging opportunities at the community centers. With funding from the \$15,000,000 funds, the City was able to build the Maple Park and the Iola Jones Community Centers. Continued funding will be necessary for the maintenance and upkeep of the community centers.



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Athletics: Year to date, 2,781 athletes have competed in recreation sports. Four years ago, a scholarship program was created to assist families with registration expenses and 36 scholarships have been given this year.

Sports Tourism: The opening of the Florence Sports Complex has broadened the ability for the City to bring in tourism events. Last fiscal year, the City hosted 51 events, bringing in approximately 50,000 visitors with an estimated economic impact of \$9.5 million. The largest event to date has been added in 2025, in which the City will host the NJCAA Division I National Championship for men's tennis.

Mr. Sallegner turned the report over to Mr. Barry Wingard to provide a report on the Veterans Park.

WWI Monument: Recently, two trees were planted by the World War I monument from the World War I Belleau Wood battlefield in France.

WWII Monument: This monument was dedicated on November 11, 2022 and is being considered for some international awards. Five monuments in the park have already won six international awards.

National Blue Star Museum Trail: The Veterans Park has been added to the National Blue Star Museum Trail.

9/11 Monument: A 9/11 ceremony has been held annually at the Veterans Park. The City has been selected to receive a seedling from the "Survivor Tree" that continued to grow at the location of the twin towers. The intent is to plant this seedling in the vicinity of the 9/11 monument.

Veterans Day Ceremony: The Florence Veterans Day ceremony was one of two in South Carolina that were selected as Veterans Day Regional sites for 2023. The ceremony will be held Saturday, November 11th this year and a monument will be dedicated to the Army Air Corps and will depict a lone airman gazing skyward in search of the Noth Star, a beacon to safely return.

MAYORAL REPORT

Mayor Ervin encouraged residents to visit the City's website and social media to stay up to date. Heroes Day was recognized on October 3, 2023 in remembrance of the officers involved in the shooting that occurred on October 3, 2018. Mayor Ervin mentioned some upcoming changes and updates to the Florence Center and she encouraged residents to visit the Athletic Hall of Fame located at the Florence Center. The 76 Gateway study is moving forward and the Irby Street Overlay District is still in committee review.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Business Development Committee, Chaired by Pro tem Jebaily

Pro tem Jebaily asked Mr. Moore to provide an update on the Third Penny road projects. Mr. Moore reported A scoring matrix was established to determine the order in which roads are resurfaced. 32 roadways have been resurfaced since the referendum passed. It is planned to resurface approximately 40 corridors over the next 12-16 months. City maintained roads account for approximately 37% of the roadways inside the City, with the majority of the roads being maintained by the State.

Pro tem Jebaily also reported that the location of the Urban Square project is the historical site of the Gamble Hotel. At the urging of the City Attorney, Ben Zeigler, an archeological survey was completed.



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Mr. Zeigler said a team has been excavating the location over the past several weeks. The Gamble Hotel was built in the late 1850s and was the first major building built in Florence. It is also the site of a skirmish during the Civil War and it is likely where the first Council meetings were held.

Community Development Committee, Chaired by Councilwoman Barnes

Councilwoman Barnes reported many beautification, weatherization and demolition projects are underway. The Community Development Committee also asked that the Finance, Budget and Audit Committee look at increased street lighting, crime prevention resources, and funding for weatherization and rehab projects.

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

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson reported Citibot was awarded the contract for the City's communication tool. The expected launch date is late January-early February. CityU graduation will take place at the November Council meeting. Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson also congratulated the Wilson High School Alumni on a successful Homecoming event.

Finance, Audit and Budget Committee, Chaired by Councilman McCall

Councilman McCall reported the Committee discussed the ARPA funds in which they considered City staff's as well as the Community Development Committee's recommendations. The Committee also finalized the round-up program and letters will be sent to all utility customers with information regarding the program.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Ervin said Council will be entering into Executive Session for a discussion of matters related to a contractual matter, for a discussion of matters related to a proposed 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 3:10 p.m.

Council resumed open session at 4:06 p.m. and took action on the following items:

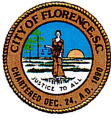
Resolution No. 2023-41

A Resolution authorizing staff to negotiate a grant agreement with the organizations in the amounts as shown in "Exhibit A" in compliance with the South Carolina Opioid Recovery Act.

Councilman McCall recused himself from the vote due to a potential conflict of interest. The recusal statement is attached to and made part of these minutes.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to allot \$105,000 to Resurrection Restoration Center for the Homeless, \$172,000 to Tenacious Grace/Five Sparrows and \$55,860 to Circle Park. Councilman Braddock seconded the motion.

Council voted 6-0 in favor of the motion, with Councilman McCall having recused himself. Resolution No. 2023-41 was adopted.



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Resolution No. 2023-43

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

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-43 and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2023-43 was adopted.

Personnel Matter

Mayor Ervin said a personnel matter was also discussed, but no action is needed.

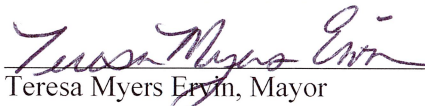
ADJOURN

Without objection, the October 9, 2023 Regular meeting of City Council was adjourned at 4:08 p.m.

Dated this 13th day of November 2023.



Casey C. Moore, Municipal Clerk



Teresa Myers Ervin, Mayor

RECUSAL STATEMENT

Member Name: Chaquez McCall

Meeting Date: 10.9.23

Agenda Item: Section Resolution Number: 2023-41

Topic: Opioid Funds

The Ethics Act, SC Code §8-13-700, provides that no public official may knowingly use his office to obtain an economic interest for himself, a family member of his immediate family, an individual with whom he is associated, or a business with which he is associated. No public official may make, participate in making, or influence a governmental decision in which he or any such person or business has an economic interest. Failure to recuse oneself from an issue in which there is or may be conflict of interest is the sole responsibility of the council member (1991 Op. Atty. Gen. No. 91-37.) A written statement describing the matter requiring action and the nature of the potential conflict of interest is required.


Justification to Recuse:

Professionally employed by or under contract with principal

Owns or has vested interest in principal or property

Other: Wife is Board member of org. that has applied for funding.

Date: 10/09/2023


Member Chaquez T. McCall

Approved by Parliamentarian: 