

Georgetown County Council held a Regular Council Meeting on Tuesday, February 13th, 2024, at 5:30 PM in the Howard Auditorium, 1610 Hawkins Street, Georgetown, South Carolina.

Present:	Bob Anderson	Stella Mercado
	Everett Carolina	Louis R. Morant
	Clint A. Elliott	Raymond Newton
	Lillie Jean Johnson	

Staff:	Jackie Broach, <i>Public Information Officer</i>	Theresa Floyd, <i>Clerk to Council</i>
	Angela Christian <i>County Administrator</i>	John D. Watson, <i>County Attorney</i>

Other staff members, members of the public, and representatives of the media were also present. In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act, a copy of the agenda was sent to newspapers, television, and radio stations, citizens of the County, Department Heads, and posted on the bulletin board in the historic Courthouse.

Chairman Louis R. Morant called the meeting to order at 5:31 PM. Councilor Everett Carolina gave an invocation, and all joined in the pledge of allegiance.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA:

Councilor Bob Anderson moved to amend the meeting agenda to defer action on two matters: *Report (6a) Procurement #23-061, Roll- off Truck for Solid Waste Collections; and Report (10b) Third reading of Ordinance No. 23-45 to amend the Pavilion Square Flexible Design District (FDD)*. Councilor Everett Carolina seconded the motion. Chairman Morant called for discussion, and none occurred.

In favor:	Bob Anderson	Stella Mercado
	Everett Carolina	Louis R. Morant
	Clint A. Elliott	Raymond Newton
	Lillie Jean Johnson	

Councilor Clint Elliott moved for approval of the meeting agenda with the previously approved changes. Councilor Stella Mercado offered a second on the motion. Upon a call for discussion from the Chairman, there was none.

In favor:	Bob Anderson	Stella Mercado
	Everett Carolina	Louis R. Morant
	Clint A. Elliott	Raymond Newton
	Lillie Jean Johnson	

SPECIAL REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS:

Nonprofit Spotlight- Multiplying Good

Dan Hoppe, Executive Director of Multiplying Good of South Carolina, gave a presentation on behalf of the organization. The non-profit organization, which focuses on youth, has been in existence for 52 years. The ultimate goal of this organization is to prepare youth for leadership in their communities. This is done through a recognition and celebration-based platform, which recognizes outstanding public services among communities. The program is offered at no cost to middle and high school students across the State of South Carolina. One of Georgetown County's outstanding school participant is Andrews High School, where students implemented "Blessing Boxes" for those in need within their community.

Outstanding Achievement Award

Human Resources Director, Walt Ackerman, introduced Mr. Robert Benfield of South Carolinas Counties Workers' Compensation Trust and the South Carolina Counties Property and Liability Trust. Mr. Benfield stated that there are 41 South Carolina counties within the Trust, and Georgetown has been one of those counties for many years. Every year in January, the Trust seeks out counties that do a great job of saving lives, time, and money, and acknowledges those counties that do activities worthy of recognition.

Georgetown County has been recognized and awarded two awards in honor of their achievements: The *Outstanding Safety Achievement Award* was earned for Georgetown County's two-phase heat stress management prevention program. The Central Safety Committee proposed a policy position that was approved by the County Administrator. The policy directed the County on how to manage equipment and employees that are working out in the hot sun. Subsequently, Holly Laycock, Georgetown County Risk Manager, and her team went out into the field and conducted training classes for employees.

In addition to this achievement, Georgetown County Risk Manager, Holly Laycock, was nominated by Florence County for the *Outstanding Service Award*, for the outstanding help that she personally gives to other South Carolina counties so that these counties can improve their safety programs as well.

Proclamation No 24-03

Human Resource Director, Walt Ackerman, introduced a Proclamation in honor of Chief Magistrate, Judge Isaac Pyatt, who has recently retired after 40 years of service to Georgetown County. Mr. Ackerman said Judge Pyatt was amazing at leading his staff through many ups and downs over the years, and he was always the same man inside of a courtroom full of people that he was outside. He will greatly be missed by Georgetown County.

Councilor Lillie Jean Johnson moved for approval of Proclamation No. 24-03, in honor and recognition of Judge Isaac Pyatt upon the occasion of his retirement from Georgetown County. Councilor Everett Carolina offered a second on the motion. Upon a call for discussion from the Chairman, there was none.

In favor:	Bob Anderson	Stella Mercado
	Everett Carolina	Louis R. Morant
	Clint A. Elliott	Raymond Newton
	Lillie Jean Johnson	

Judge Pyatt was presented with a framed copy of the proclamation surrounded by other Summary Court Judges, staff, family and friends.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

John Sconyers

Captain John Sconyers, owner of *Aces of Fishing Charters* in Murrells Inlet, came to speak to County Council about proposed changes to the County's boat ordinance. He voiced appreciation to the members of County Council who responded to his recent letter. He voiced concerns regarding the section the ordinance that restricts the length of vessels permitted to utilize public landings. If there is a limit on 30 ft. vessels, local businesses will have to use marinas, which will make the costs of doing business astronomical. He understands that Council is concerned about insurance, however, he stated that insurance is not an issue. His clients are protected under his insurance policy from the moment they step out of their car, to the moment they get back into it. Mr. Sconyers thanked County Council for their time, and stated that he wanted them to see a face of someone who is affected by this ordinance.

Chris Spigner

Ms. Spigner addressed County Council with safety concerns regarding the boat ordinance. She stated that Rover Tours has been safely operating for 29 years, and has never had an accident when loading and unloading passengers for tours. They send employees to line up passengers where they wait for the vessel to tie off on the dock. Once the boat is safely docked and ready for passengers, an employee takes the passengers down to the floating dock and helps everyone on to the boat. Once all passengers are seated, a safety information orientation takes place prior to leaving the dock. Upon arrival back to the doc after their tour, passengers are asked to stay seated until the boat is secured to the doc and a mate has opened the gate. Ms. Spigner once again states that this is done safely and has been done so since 1995.

Matt Long

Captain Matt Long, *Real Myrtle Beach Fishing Charters*, addressed County Council regarding the boat ordinance. He stated that if this Ordinance passes in its current form that he will potentially be put out of business, as he cannot afford to use a marina. This would not only impact him, but all of his employees that will also be unemployed. Captain Long told County Council that his business does have a million-dollar policy taken out on both of his vessels. His passengers are covered from the moment they step out of their vehicles, to the moment they step back in. In terms of taking up space at the boat ramps, he stated that those who are chartering boats are the ones who have boat operators that are experiences, trained, and knowledgeable. Delays at unloading and trailering boats are unusually those who only recreationally use their boats. He implored County Council to reconsider the size limitation currently proposed in the boat ordinance.

Clarissa Tuten

Ms. Tuten addressed County Council with safety concerns that Country Council has brought up in regard to the boat ordinance. She stated that in order to be an interpreter or mate here on a tour boat, her training only consisted of safety. This included safe loading and unloading of passengers, safety briefings for guests, mandatory overboard trainings and much more. She stressed to County Council that the vessel is set to dock no more than 5 minutes before the tour as they do not want to cause a hindrance to recreational boaters. Ms. Tuten echoed Councilor Newton's concerns that Winyah Bay can be a dangerous place for both locals and non-locals. However, she said that allowing tours on Winyah Bay helps ensure the safe travels and recreation of those who are not well versed in boat operation or safety. She pled with County Council to consider amending the boat ordinance.

CONSENT AGENDA

Three matters on the Consent Agenda were approved previously during the meeting by virtue of the agenda approval process:

Procurement #23-062, Four (4) ATV's and Two (2) Side by Side Utility Vehicles – County Council award a bid to Rumble On Dealers, Inc. dba as Ride Now Power Sports of Irving, Texas, at a total of \$70,740.47, inclusive of delivery plus any additional sales tax.

Procurement #24-003, Oak Creek Dredging – County Council awarded a construction contract and Purchase Order in the amount of \$534,686.55 to Ahtna Marine & Construction Company to perform the Oaks Creek Dredging work.

Procurement #24-009, Historic Courthouse Duct Cleaning – County Council awarded a construction contract associated with Procurement No. 24-009 to Trane's OMINA and authorized the appropriation of an additional \$100,000 from the fund balance to cover smaller flood related expenses.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

Ordinance No. 24-01

County Council held a public hearing on Ordinance No. 24-01. Chairman Louis R. Morant opened the floor for public comments on Ordinance No. 24-01, and Ordinance to amend the Future Land Use (FLU) map for 3 Parcels, located at 46 Channel Bluff Avenue and 13236 Ocean Hwy, identified as TMS#s 04-0141-07600-00, 04-0141-077-0-00 and 04-0141-078-00-00, from Medium Density Residential to Transitional. No one spoke on the matter, and Chairman Louis Morant closed the floor for public comments pertaining to Ordinance No. 24-01.

ORDINANCES-Third Reading

Ordinance No. 23-38

Third reading of Ordinance No. 23-38 was introduced by County Attorney, Jay Watson. Mr. Watson responded to various questions pertaining to this ordinance from members of County. Council.

Following the discussion, Councilor Clint Elliott moved for third reading approval of Ordinance No. 23-38, an Ordinance to amend Chapter 6 Section 6-3 of the Georgetown County Code of Ordinances

Pertaining to Public Boat Landings Regulations. Councilor Bob Anderson offered a second on the motion. Chairman Louis Morant called for discussion on the motion.

Councilor Clint Elliott made a motion to amend Ordinance No. 23-38, paragraph d (3) to remove the 30' length restriction. Councilor Stella Mercado offered a second on the motion. Chairman Morant called for discussion on the amendment.

Councilor Raymond Newton moved to further amend Ordinance No. 23-38, as follows, "loading or unloading of any cargo of passengers for hire or compensation except and excluding Captains who hold a current operation of uninspected passengers' vehicles license commonly known as six-pack or charter boat Captain's license of a vessel with no more than that 6 passengers for charter, to additionally permit 40ft. tourist vessels with a qualified captain and crew that are Coastguard inspected and can carry up to 40 passengers shall be permitted to utilize the Carroll Ashmore Campbell Marine Complex. Permits for the larger boats may be obtained through Parks and Recreation, and the number issued, per year, will be at their discretion. Councilor Everett Carolina offered a second on the motion.

Chairman Morant called for any further discussion on the first amendment, prior to the vote.

Councilor Raymond Newton stated that he believes removing the 30 'length restriction serves the County's constituents well along with our local businesses and the commercial fishing industry. He stated that removal of this content takes a worry and a burden off of those constituents' backs.

Councilor Everett Carolina stated that Georgetown County promotes tourism, and this is another form of tourism. Visitors come here to fish, shop at our boutiques, eat at our restaurants, and take boat tours on the waterways. He believes limiting ecotourism will also be limiting employment opportunities for individuals in the tourism and deep-sea fishing field. These business owners have presented that they have the required insurance and safety plans that eliminate liability from being an issue. Lastly, he stated that Georgetown County has an amazing Risk Management Department that could share its expertise on increasing the safety at our public boat landings.

Councilor Bob Anderson stated that when concerns were raised in regards to the restriction on boat length, Country Council did its due diligence to fix the issue. Council did reach out to boat manufacturers to determine how large the new vessels being produced are in order to help them make a better decision for the constituents.

Councilor Stella Mercado asked County Administrator, Angela Christian, if she could look into insurance and permitting to insure that the commercial users of the boat landings would have the proper insurance and any other safety requirements needed before they use those landings. The Administrator stated that she would respond back to County Council with a proposal on requirements in order for these vessels to safety use public boat landings. The Chairman called for further discussion on the amendment to Ordinance No. 23-38.

In favor:	Bob Anderson	Stella Mercado
	Everett Carolina	Louis R. Morant
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The Chairman called for further discussion on the motion for a second amendment to Ordinance No. 23-38, pertaining to permitted use of the Carroll Ashmore Campbell Marine Complex by commercial vessels.

Councilor Everett Carolina stated that this is another form of tourist generated business in the form of eco and waterway tourism. He stated that this is a type of business would enhance learning about Georgetown County.

Councilor Raymond Newton stated that County Council is about to vote, not in regards to one business, but on an entire industry within Georgetown County. He feels that if a member of County Council votes against this proposal, they need to take a deeper look at what they are actually voting against. There is construction equipment being loaded and unloaded at our public county landings on a daily basis. These are not small vessels, rather these are large barges that are bringing in heavy equipment such as backhoes, track hoes etc. that weigh tons and tons. This equipment is being transported via public boat landings for a commercial purpose. Other industries that use our boat landings include commercial crabbers, and the commercial boats that gather oysters, clams, and our county also has a local shad fishing industry. Councilor Newton then stated that, a vote against this amendment is a vote against the entire industry. This would indicate that Georgetown County is *not* a business-friendly county. He said if there is a legitimate reason why County Council shouldn't at least try with the passing of this Ordinance that he would like to hear it. Councilor Newton added that commercial businesses, logging trucks and others, use our roadways every day. They pay county taxes, and a road user fee to do so, just like the rest of us. The owners of these commercial vessels pay taxes to use these boat landings just like the rest of us. They are not getting anything for "free". There was no further discussion, and Chairman Morant called for the vote on the second amendment to Ordinance No. 23-38.

In favor:	Everett Carolina	Raymond Newton
Opposed:	Bob Anderson	Stella Mercado
	Clint A. Elliott	Louis R. Morant
	Lillie Jean Johnson	

The amendment failed to receive a majority vote, and did not pass.

Chairman Morant called for the vote on third reading approval of Ordinance No. 23-38 (including the amended language regarding vessel lengths), and the vote was as follows:

In favor:	Bob Anderson	Stella Mercado
	Everett Carolina	Louis R. Morant
	Clint A. Elliott	Raymond Newton
	Lillie Jean Johnson	

Ordinance No. 23-45

At the request of the applicant, County Council deferred third reading consideration of Ordinance No. 23-45 to amend the Pavilion Square Flexible Design District (FDD).

Ordinance No. 24-01

Councilor Stella Mercado moved for third reading approval of Ordinance No. 24-01, an ordinance to amend the Future Land Use (FLU) map for 3 parcels, located at 46 Channel Bluff Avenue and 13236 Ocean Hwy, identified as TMS#s 04-0141-076-00-00, 04-0141-077-00-00 and 04-0141-078-00-00, from Medium Density Residential to Transitional. Councilor Clint Elliott offered a second on the motion. Upon a call for discussion from the Chairman, there was none.

In favor:	Bob Anderson	Stella Mercado
	Everett Carolina	Louis R. Morant
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Ordinance No. 24-02

Councilor Stella Mercado moved for third reading approval of Ordinance No. 24-02 to rezone three parcels located at 13236 Ocean Hwy and 46 Channel Bluff Avenue in Pawleys Island, TMS# 04-0141-076-00-00, 04-0141-077-00-00 and 04-0141-078-00-00, from 10,000 square feet residential (R-10) and General Commercial (GC) to Neighborhood Commercial (NC). Councilor Clint Elliott offered a second on the motion. Upon a call for discussion from the Chairman, there was none.

In favor:	Bob Anderson	Stella Mercado
	Everett Carolina	Louis R. Morant
	Clint A. Elliott	Raymond Newton
	Lillie Jean Johnson	

ORDINANCES – First Reading

Chairman Louis Morant read the following ordinance into the record by title only:

Ordinance No. 24-04 – An Ordinance to amend the FY24 Operating Budget of Georgetown County.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Regular Council Meeting – January 23, 2024

Councilor Clint Elliott moved to adopt the minutes of the County Council meeting held on January 23, 2024. The motion was seconded by Councilor Stella Mercado. Upon a call for discussion from the Chairman, there was none.

In favor:	Bob Anderson	Stella Mercado
	Everett Carolina	Louis R. Morant
	Clint A. Elliott	Raymond Newton
	Lillie Jean Johnson	

ADJOURNMENT

Chairman Morant called for further business to come before County Council prior to adjournment. Councilor Everett Carolina stated that for the past three years he has been making statements regarding the “Clementa C. Pinckney Hate Crimes Act”. On October 8th, 2019, Georgetown County Council passed Resolution No. 19-22 supporting the enactment of legislation against hate crimes in South Carolina. Since that date, our state legislators have yet to pass this much needed state law. This has left Wyoming and South Carolina as the last two states without such laws. Councilor Carolina asked the County Administrator, County Attorney, and Chairman Morant to put further emphasis on this request by writing an annual letter to the members of our local delegation. He said he will continue to read this statement in the first two months of each New Year until this law has been passed.

Being no further business, Councilor Clint Elliott moved to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded by Councilor Stella Mercado. The meeting was adjourned at 6:40 PM.

Date

Clerk to Council