

# Regular Town Council Meeting Minutes

January 16, 2024

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## **I. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Sulka called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

### **PRESENT**

Mayor Lisa Sulka

Mayor Pro-Tem Larry Toomer

Councilmember Fred Hamilton

Councilmember Bridgette Frazier

Councilmember Dan Wood

The meeting is a combination of the Town Council Quarterly CIP Workshop - Combined with the Rescheduled Town Council Meeting

## **II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIENCE**

The Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation was given by Mayor Lisa Sulka.

## **III. SWEARING IN NEWELY-ELECTED OFFICIALS (MAYOR & COUNCIL MEMBERS):**

1. Swearing In of Mayor Elect Larry Toomer and Seating of Councilmembers Bridgette Frazier and Dan Wood – Municipal Judge Clifford Bush III  
Municipal Judge Clifford Bush Sworn-in Mayor Larry Toomer (1<sup>st</sup> term) Councilmember Bridgette Frazier (2<sup>nd</sup> term) and Councilmember Dan Wood (3<sup>rd</sup> term).

2. Appointment of Mayor Pro Tempore

Motion made by Councilmember Frazier to appoint Councilmember Wood as Mayor Pro Tempore, Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton. Town Council unanimously voted Councilmember Dan Wood as Mayor Pro Tempore.

Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember Frazier

Mayor Sulka turned the gavel over to Mayor Toomer.

## **IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA**

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to adopt the agenda as presented.

Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember Frazier

## **V. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES**

1. Regular Meeting Minutes of 01/16/2024

Motion made by Councilmember Hamilton, Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to adopt the agenda as presented.

Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Council Member Hamilton, Council Member Frazier

## VI. PRESENTATIONS, CELEBRATIONS, AND RECOGNITIONS

1. Beaufort County School District Character Student of the Month - Mayor Larry Toomer

Mayor Toomer honored Monica Tagle Bautista, a 3<sup>rd</sup> grade student at Bluffton Elementary School, Student of the Month – Character Trait – Respect and Gratitude.

Monica Tangle was absent for this award.

2. Martin Luther King, Jr. Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer

Mayor Larry Toomer presented this proclamation to Bluffton MLK Observance Committee former committee president, Ann Cook.

3. Presentation of Utility Tax Credit Award from Palmetto Electric Cooperative – Berl Davis, President and CEO

Ashley Fester awarded the Town of Bluffton \$200,000 for its economic development efforts within the Buckwalter Multi-County Commerce Park.

4. Update on the Beaufort County Penny Tax Advisory Committee – Charlie Wetmore, Bluffton Committee Appointee

Charlie Wetmore, a representative of the Beaufort County Penny Tax Advisory Committee, updated Town Council about the committee's recommendations. Beaufort County Council is considering these recommendations for a formal vote in February. The recommendations feature a penny tax for transportation needs, which will sunset in 15 years and will produce an estimated \$1.65 Billion for major transportation projects. The recommendations which affect Bluffton include \$60 million dedicated to projects in Town and \$100 million for mass transit.

Mayor Larry Toomer, on behalf of Town Council, thanked Charlie Wetmore for his service on this committee.

5. Town of Bluffton Annual Development Agreement Update - Heather Colin, Assistant Town Manager

Assistant Town Manager Heather Colin presented an update to Town Council regarding the Town's Development Agreements. The highlights are:

- 92% of the Town is within development agreement.
- 8% of the Town's neighborhoods which don't have a development agreement are the Town's earliest neighborhoods which developed organically and didn't have pre-planned infrastructure and include the Historic District, Goethe-Schults community, and the Buck Island-Simmons ville Community.
- Currently, the Town is 55% built-out in total – with residential build-out at 77% built-out and 36% of "non-residential" areas is built out. Non-residential includes commercial, institutional buildings as well as civic spaces and civic structures.

6. Update and Discussion Related to SCADPRO Recommendations for the Squire Pope Carriage House and Welcome Center - Glen Umberger, Historic Preservationist

Glen Umberger, the Town's historic preservationist, updated Town Council on the next steps related to the Town's partnership with SCADPRO. The Town partnered with Savannah College of Art and Design (SCAD) and its SCADPRO program which produced proposed themes, content, and components for the Town's future Welcome Center.

Town Council advised staff to proceed with this project.

7. Update and Discussion Related to a Conceptual Master Plan for Buckwalter Place Park, Pat Rooney - Capital Improvements Program Manager

Capital Improvements Program Manager Pat Rooney updated Town Council regarding a conceptual master plan for Buckwalter Place Park. The conceptual master plan features providing shading, lighting and connectivity to/from park to parking, sidewalks, open-air pavilion, and landscaping.

Town Council gave guidance on their preferences for the conceptual master plan.

## **VII. PUBLIC COMMENT**

Carolyn Smith – 1 First Street, Bluffton - Ms. Smith spoke in support of the ghost road improvement and maintenance. She has requested the town leave the roadways as they are and ensure the public does not park and block the roadways to the homes of the citizens that reside there.

Skip Hoagland – 61 Sparwheel Lane, Hilton Head Island – Mr. Hoagland expressed his opinions regarding government corruption.

## **VIII. COMMUNICATIONS FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL**

Councilmember Frazier discussed the success surrounding the Martin Luther King Jr. Holiday and a host of events over the weekend coordinated by the MLK Observance Committee.

Councilmember Frazier also stated she has been working with community members regarding the Ghost Road project.

Mayor Pro-Tem Wood shared the passing of Bluffton resident Doug Corkern and expressed his condolences.

## **IX. PUBLIC HEARING & FINAL READING**

No Agenda Items

## **X. FORMAL AGENDA ITEMS**

1. Consideration of a Resolution Establishing an Improvement and Maintenance Plan for Roadways in Old Town – Heather Colin, Assistant Town Manager  
Motion made by Councilmember Hamilton, Seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Wood to approve a resolution establishing an improvement and maintenance plan for roadways in Old Town. Town Council unanimously approved this resolution.  
Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember Frazier
2. Consideration of a Resolution Approving the Purchase of 140 Buck Island Road - Stephen Steese, Town Manager  
Motion made by Councilmember Hamilton, Seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem to approve purchasing 140 Buck Island Road, an approximate 15.5-acre parcel, for \$2.5 Million to limit growth.

This parcel is located on the corner of Bluffton Parkway and Buck Island Road.

Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember Frazier

3. Consideration of an Ordinance Amending the Town of Bluffton FY 2024 Budget to Provide for the Expenditures of Certain Funds and to Allocate Sources of Revenue for the Said Funds – First Reading - Natalie Majorkiewicz, Director of Finance

Motion made by Councilmember Hamilton, Seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Wood to table this reading for a budget workshop or for review during FY2025 budget process. Town Council unanimously approved tabling this reading.

Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember Frazier

4. Consideration of an Ordinance Authorizing an Economic Development Incentive Agreement between the Town of Bluffton and Solomon Property Holdings, LLC in support of the development of 15,000 square feet of a Health & Wellness Facility - First Reading - Chris Forster, Assistance Town Manager

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Seconded by Council Member Hamilton to approve the first reading of an Ordinance Authorizing the Town Manager to enter into an Economic Development Agreement between the Town of Bluffton and Solomon Property Holdings, LLC with the removal of the impact fee credit within the presentation with the understanding that staff will present an alternative source at the second reading.

Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Councilmember Hamilton; Voting Nea: Councilmember Frazier

#### **XI. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS**

1. Monthly Department Reports: Police, Finance and Administration, Human Resources, Municipal Court, Projects & Watershed Resilience, Public Services, Engineering, Don Ryan Center for Innovation, and Growth Management

2. Town Manager Monthly Report

Motion made by Councilmember Hamilton, Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve the Consent Agenda items as presented.

Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember Frazier

#### **XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION**

1. Discussion Relating to Proposed Contractual Agreements Between Beaufort County School District and the Town of Bluffton (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70 [a][2]) - Stephen Steese, Town Manager

Motion made by Councilmember Hamilton to enter into Executive Session, Seconded by Mayor pro-Tem Wood.

Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember Frazier

#### **XIII. ACTION FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION**

Town council unanimously approved authorizing the Town Manager, in coordination with legal counsel, to finalize and execute a Memorandum of Understanding with Beaufort County School District to partner on the potential purchase of property, exchange of property and purchase of development rights for a large parcel, which is located in the Town.

#### **XVI. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion was made by Councilmember Frazier, Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to adjourn at 8:41pm.

Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro-Tem Wood, Councilmember Hamilton, Councilmember Frazier

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Marcia Hunter, Town Clerk

Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

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Larry C. Toomer, Mayor

Town of Bluffton, South Carolina