

Regular Town Council Meeting

Theodore D. Washington Municipal Building, Henry “Emmett” McCracken Jr. Council Chambers, 20
Bridge Street, Bluffton, SC

June 09, 2026

I. CALL TO ORDER

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

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Toomer.

III. INVOCATION

The Invocation was delivered by Councilmember Frazier.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

1. Regular Meeting Minutes of 05/12/2026

A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and was seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of 05/12/2026.

All were in favor and the motion passed.

2. Budget Workshop Minutes of 05/21/2026

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton and was seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve the Budget Workshop Minutes of 05/21/2026.

All were in favor and the motion passed.

3. Budget Workshop Minutes of 05/28/2026

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton and was seconded by Councilmember Wood to approve the Budget Workshop Minutes of 05/28/2026.

All were in favor and the motion passed.

V. PRESENTATIONS, CELEBRATIONS, AND RECOGNITIONS

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

Mayor Larry Toomer, on behalf of Town Council, honored Bluffton High School 12th-grade student, Camille Johnson, for the character trait of forgiveness.

2. Juneteenth Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer

Mayor Larry Toomer, on behalf of Town Council, presented the Juneteenth Proclamation to Bluffton MLK Observance Committee member Angela Douglas.

3. Carolina Days Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer

Mayor Larry Toomer, on behalf of Town Council, presented the Carolina Days Proclamation to Bluffton 250 Committee Member Michael Williams.

4. Update of Beaufort County Transportation Penny Tax Advisory Committee (TAC) - Lisa Sulka

An update of Beaufort County Transportation Penny Tax Advisory Committee (TAC) was presented to council by Lisa Sulka.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Ms. Robin Otterbine, 12 Pine Ridge Drive, expressed concerns about unsafe operation of e-bikes and scooters in local neighborhoods, noting widespread disregard for pedestrian and vehicle safety rules.

Ms. Otterbine recommended forming a committee to consider a local ordinance, similar to golf cart regulations, addressing safety, infrastructure, education, and user responsibility. She reported near-miss incidents involving reckless e-bike use on sidewalks and expressed her willingness to assist in developing a solution.

Council acknowledged the issue and stated they are exploring potential approaches.

Mr. David Cowart, 23 Pinecrest Way, thanked Council for not supporting recent redevelopment proposals for the Pinecrest golf course and surrounding properties. He reported that a group has approached the POA president with interest in purchasing the pub building and adjacent land, with the intent to reopen it as a restaurant and potentially construct approximately 20 homes, noting this was a confirmed inquiry.

Mr. Cowart also stated that the golf course owners are making a good-faith effort to maintain the property and that it does not appear derelict. He expressed appreciation for Council's continued support.

Mr. Drew Lonker, 101 Mercer Rd., Savannah, GA, civil engineer with Thomas & Hutton, spoke regarding proposed updates to the Town's wetland and stormwater ordinances. He requested clearer criteria for the variance process, noting that wetland permitting often involves lengthy timelines and multiple agencies, and applicants need consistency in how permits will be evaluated.

He also raised concerns about wetland buffer requirements extending onto adjacent properties and asked that this issue be clarified in the ordinance revisions.

Mr. Lonker commended staff for their work and encouraged further review of these items before adoption.

Ms. Catherine "Cat" Donaldson, Palmetto Beach Lane, addressed Council regarding two concerns. She questioned the projected cost of the planned disc golf course and recommended seeking local business sponsorships for each of the 18 holes, noting she would participate as an early sponsor.

Ms. Donaldson also expressed concerns on behalf of nearby business owners regarding the proposed May River Road closure for the Juneteenth celebration and other Town events. She noted financial impacts experienced during last year's closure and asked the Town to consider the economic effects and evaluate alternative locations or routes that could accommodate large crowds without requiring road closure.

Will Howard - 65 Red Cedar Street - Mr. Howard spoke regarding the proposed wetland ordinance. He noted that, as a member of the Planning Commission, he did not support the ordinance in the

form previously presented. Mr. Howard stated that the draft lacked clear, quantitative criteria for the waiver process and for any additional permit conditions the Town might impose beyond those issued by the South Carolina Bureau of Coastal Management. He expressed concern that the ordinance, as written, was overly subjective and could create uncertainty for property owners and developers who have already met state permitting requirements.

He also noted that coastal counties, including Bluffton, still require state permits for impacts to non-jurisdictional wetlands. Mr. Howard requested that any revised ordinance remove subjectivity and include objective, measurable standards for evaluating wetland impacts.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL

No communications were reported by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton, Councilmembers Wood and Burden.

Councilmember Frazier addressed public comments regarding the Bluffton Juneteenth Festival, emphasizing its historical significance and noting that no businesses have reported direct negative impacts to the MLK Observance Committee or Town Council. She stated the event follows required state and local protocols, provides offsite parking and trolleys, and benefits nearby businesses. Councilmember Frazier encouraged anyone with concerns to contact the committee or Council.

Mayor Toomer expressed support for Bluffton Juneteenth Festival but suggested Council should review road closure impacts due to increasing traffic on May River Road.

VIII. WORKSHOP AGENDA ITEMS

There were no Workshop Agenda Items to report.

IX. PUBLIC HEARING & FINAL READING

1. Consideration of an Ordinance Approving the Town of Bluffton Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Consolidated Budget – Public Hearing & Final Reading – Stephen Steese, Town Manager

A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and was seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton approving the second and final reading of the Town of Bluffton Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Consolidated Budget.

Town Council unanimously approved the Fiscal Year 2027 Proposed Consolidated Budget and the motion passed.

X. FORMAL AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consideration of an Ordinance Authorizing an Economic Development Incentive Agreement between the Town of Bluffton and Sterling Corporation (d/b/a Sterling Helicopter) Second and Final Reading – Paul Arvantides, CEO, Don Ryan Center for Innovation

A motion was made by Councilmember Burden and was seconded by Councilmember Wood approving the second and final reading of an Ordinance Authorizing an Economic Development Incentive Agreement between the Town of Bluffton and Sterling Corporation (d/b/a Sterling Helicopter).

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

2. Consideration of a Resolution to Install a 4-way Stop Sign at the Intersection of Boundary and Lawrence Streets – Stephen Steese, Town Manager

A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and was seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton to approve a resolution to install a 4-way stop sign at the Intersection of Boundary and Lawrence Streets.

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

3. Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing an Extension of the Validity Period for the Purchase and Sale of a Parcel of Real Property located in Bluffton, SC of Approximately 55.18 Acres Owned by Inland Bluffton, LLC - Stephen Steese, Town Manager

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton and was seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve a resolution authorizing an extension of the validity period for the purchase and sale of a parcel of real property located in Bluffton, SC of approximately 55.18 Acres owned by Inland Bluffton, LLC.

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

4. Consideration of a Resolution to Establish an Entertainment Venue Exploratory Workgroup – Chris Forster, Assistant Town Manager

A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and was seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve a resolution establishing an Entertainment Venue Exploratory Workgroup.

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

5. Consideration of an Ordinance to Amend Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23 - Unified Development Ordinance, Article 5 - Design Standards, Sec. 5.10 (Stormwater); and Article 9 - Definitions and Interpretation, Sec. 9.2 (Defined Terms) - First Reading - Andrea Moreno, Watershed Division Manager

A motion was made by Councilmember Frazier and was seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton to approve the first reading of an ordinance to amend Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23 - Unified Development Ordinance, Article 5 - Design Standards, Sec. 5.10 (Stormwater); and Article 9 - Definitions and Interpretation, Sec. 9.2 (Defined Terms).

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

6. Consideration of Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Funding Recommendations for Quarter Ending March 31, 2026 - Shannon Milroy, Budget & Procurement Manager

- Farmer's Market of Bluffton requesting a supplemental \$9,375 to assist with facility rental fees during the 2026 Market Season

A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and was seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve a \$9,375 supplemental grant to The Farmer's Market of Bluffton for additional facilities support during the 2026 Market Season.

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

- Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra requesting \$46,818 for the 2026 Bluffton Concerts
A motion was made by Councilmember Burden and was seconded by Councilmember Wood to approve a \$46,818 grant to the Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra for the 2026 Bluffton Concerts.
Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.
 - Beaufort Water Search and Rescue requesting \$21,875 for the purchase of a replacement boat- ATAC Recommendation of no award - \$0
A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton and was seconded by Councilmember Wood to support the recommendation made by ATAC of no award to Beaufort Water Search and Rescue for the purchase of a replacement boat.
Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.
 - Beaufort Water Search and Rescue requesting \$7,500 for a targeted FY2026 Tourism Safety Awareness & Marketing Campaign - ATAC Recommendation of no award - \$0
A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and was seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton to support the recommendation made by ATAC of NO AWARD to Beaufort Water Search and Rescue for the FY2026 Targeted Marketing Campaign.
Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.
 - Bluffton MLK Observance Committee requesting \$20,000 for the 11th Annual Juneteenth Festival
A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton and was seconded by Councilmember Wood to approve a \$20,000 grant to The Bluffton MLK Observance Committee in support of the 11th Annual Juneteenth Celebration Weekend.
Councilmember Frazier currently serves on the Bluffton MLK Observance Committee and has recused herself from this item.
In a 3-1 vote, Council approved the grant request.
Voting Yea: Mayor Toomer, Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton and Councilmember Wood
Voting Nay: Councilmember Burden
 - Historic Bluffton Foundation requesting \$50,000 for Heyward House Museum's FY2027 Operations
A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton and was seconded by Councilmember Wood to approve a \$50,000 grant to the Historic Bluffton Foundation in support of FY2027 operating expenses related to the Heyward House Museum.
Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.
7. Approval to Authorize a Construction Contract with Nix Construction Company, Inc. for New Riverside Barn Park Disc Golf Course (Fiscal Impact: \$229,385.03) - Pat Rooney, Capital Improvements Program Manager

A motion was made by Councilmember Burden and was seconded by Councilmember Wood to authorize the Town Manager to enter into a contract with Nix Construction Company, Inc. for New Riverside Barn Park Disc Golf Course (Fiscal Impact: \$229,385.03)

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

8. Consideration of a Resolution for Fiscal Year 2027 Annual Marketing Plan Presented by the Destination Marketing Organization - Ariana Pernice, Vice-President Visitor & Convention Bureau, Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce and Natalie Majorkiewicz, Director of Finance & Administration

A motion was made by Councilmember Frazier and was seconded by Councilmember Wood to approve a resolution authorizing Fiscal Year 2027 Annual Marketing Plan Presented by the Destination Marketing Organization

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

XI. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton and was seconded by Councilmember Burden to accept the Consent Agenda as submitted.

Town Council unanimously agreed to the motion to accept as submitted.

1. Monthly Department Reports: Police, Finance and Administration, Human Resources, Municipal Court, Projects & Watershed Resilience, Public Services, Don Ryan Center for Innovation, and Growth Management
2. Town Manager Monthly Report
3. Consideration of Emergency Procurement of HVAC System for the Law Enforcement Center (Fiscal Impact \$374,459.00) - Larry Beckler, Director of Public Resources
4. Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing Acceptance of Amended Easement Donation from Beaufort County School District Necessary to Complete Portions of the Pritchard Street Streetscape and Drainage Project - Kimberly Washok-Jones, Director of Projects and Watershed Resilience
5. Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing the Renewal of a Three-Party Intergovernmental Agreement for Indigent Defense Representation at the Town of Bluffton Municipal Court with the Law Office of Carol A. Miller and City of Beaufort - Lisa Cunningham, Clerk of Court
6. Consideration of Authorization for the Town Manager to Engage in Negotiations for a New Bluffton Municipal Court Prosecutor - Chief Joe Babkiewicz, Bluffton Police Department
7. Consideration of Memoranda of Agreement or IGA Annual Renewals - Chris Forster, Assistant Town Manager
 - Bluffton Township Fire District for Vehicle Maintenance
 - Beaufort County School District for School Resource Officers and Crossing Guards
 - South Carolina Department of Juvenile Justice for Detention Services

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton and was seconded by Councilmember Frazier to enter into Executive Session.

1. Personnel Matters Regarding Town Council Appointments of Boards, Committees, and Commissions (Pursuant to Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70 [a][1])

XIII. ACTION FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion was made by Councilmember Burden and seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton to Appoint the following citizens with terms expiring June 30, 2029:

Michael LaPorte to the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee - Hospitality seat

Lindsay Hartman to the Don Ryan Center for Innovation Board - Director seat

Josh Tiller to the Board of Zoning Appeals

Sarah Witcher to the Public Arts Committee

Ashely Feaster, Charlie Wetmore, David Johnson, Lisa Sulka, Joel Taylor, Lynn Hummel, and Houssam Aboukhater to the Entertainment Venue Exploratory Committee

Reappoint the following citizens with terms expiring June 30, 2029:

Christy Parker, Nate Pringle and Scott Thrasher to the Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee

Jessica Palladino to the Beautification Committee

Denolis Polite, Doug Magill and Meg James to the Affordable Housing Committee

Tim Dolnik and Gerry Workman to the Board of Zoning Appeals

Joe Nix, Rob Marino, and Kari Miller to the Construction Board of Adjustments and Appeals

Joe DePauw, Carletha Frazier, Jim Hess and Debbie Wunder to the Historic Preservation Commission

Michael Brock and Lydia DePauw to the Planning Commission

Michael Frazier, Reginald Howard, Mayra Rivera-Vasquez and Tabor Vaux to the Law Enforcement Citizens Advisory Committee

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and was seconded by Mayor Pro Tempore Hamilton to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 PM.

Marcia Hunter, Town Clerk
Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

Mayor Larry C. Toomer, Mayor
Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

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