

Regular Town Council Meeting

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

May 13, 2025

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

A moment of silence was observed for Mayor Toomer and his family for the loss of a family member.

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was led by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood.

III. INVOCATION

The Invocation was given by Councilmember Burden.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

1. Regular Meeting Minutes of 04/08/2025

A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of 04/08/2025 as submitted.

2. Quarterly Workshop Minutes of 04/29/2025

A motion made by Councilmember Burden; Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of 04/29/2025 as submitted.

V. PRESENTATIONS, CELEBRATIONS, AND RECOGNITIONS

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

On behalf of Town Council, Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood honored the student of the month, Braylin Rogers a 10th grader from Bluffton High School. Braylin was recognized for the trait of self-control.

2. National Mental Health Substance Use Prevention Month Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer

On behalf of Town Council, Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood presented the National Mental Health Substance Use Prevention Month Proclamation to LowCountry Alliance for Healthy Youth, accepted by Teens for Healthy Youth members, Claudia Barrientos and Nick Andreoletti.

3. Tuberous Sclerosis Complex Global Awareness Day Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer

On behalf of Town Council, Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood presented the Tuberous Sclerosis Complex Global Awareness Day Proclamation to TSC Alliance: Carolinas Community Region, accepted by Amy Bredeson and Stephanie Hurst.

4. Tourette Syndrome Awareness Month Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer

On behalf of Town Council, Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood presented David Roth, an 8th grader from H. E. McCracken Middle School with the Tourette Syndrome Awareness Month Proclamation for the month of May.

5. Historic Preservation Month Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer

On behalf of Town Council, Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood presented the Historic Preservation Month Proclamation to the Historic Preservationist for the Town of Bluffton, Glen Umberger and members from the Bluffton Historic Foundation, Nicki Graziani, Jen Sommerville and Bruce Trimbur. May is Historic Preservation Month.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

John Reed 38 Minuteman Drive - Mr. Reed spoke of concerns regarding the proposed amendments of the Code of Ordinance, Chapter 23 – Wetlands.

Mike Williams 84 Fording Court - Mr. Williams spoke of concerns regarding the ongoing development and requested staff be mindful of back-to-back communities.

Tiffany Kicklighter 1 Padding Lane, Unit B - Ms. Kicklighter spoke of an incident with BCSO and Bluffton PD resulting in a medical episode. Her concerns were expressed and received by members of council.

Barrett Collins 12 Red Cedar Street – Ms. Collins provided pictures of flooding in the neighborhood and spoke of the Schults Tract, 100-year storms, removal of vegetation and infrastructure. She has requested a meeting with all parties regarding water management. Images of the flooding were distributed to members of council.

Adrian Cain 386 Spanish Wells Road HHI – Mr. Carin spoke in opposition of the ordinance for Chapter 23 – Wetlands. He spoke on behalf of the Hilton Head Area HBA.

Brian Esposito 10 Pink Sand Lane – Mr. Esposito of Esposito Construction, Inc, has expressed concerns regarding protecting and developing the wetlands. He also spoke of the land he has in Bluffton, stating if the ordinance passes the second reading, he would not be able to develop the property.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Councilmember Frazier thanked members of the public for the courage required to speak. She noted the importance of documenting concerns of citizens and working together toward resolving any concerns.

Councilmember Hamilton expressed his condolences to the Toomer Family.

Councilmember Burden thanked the individuals that spoke during the public comment period.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood also thanked the individuals that spoke. He stated the importance of addressing council in a civil manner where there is an opportunity to be heard.

VIII. WORKSHOP AGENDA ITEMS

1. Direction and Input on Proposed Amendments to the Buckwalter Development Agreement and Concept Plan, Easements, Land Swap Agreement, Transfer of Development Rights and the Purchase and Sale Agreement regarding the Willow Run Tracts between the Town and the Beaufort County School District – Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management

Town Council members provided guidance for staff regarding proposed amendments to the Buckwalter Development Agreement and Concept Plan, Easements, Land Swap Agreement, Transfer of Development Rights and the Purchase and Sale Agreement regarding the Willow Run Tracts between the Town and the Beaufort County School District.

IX. PUBLIC HEARING & FINAL READING

X. FORMAL AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consideration of an Ordinance Approving the Town of Bluffton Fiscal Year 2026 Proposed Consolidated Budget – First Reading – Stephen Steese, Town Manager

A motion made by Councilmember Frazer; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve the FY 2026 proposed consolidated Budget on First Reading.

Town Council unanimously approved the first reading of the FY 2026 proposed consolidated budget.

2. Consideration of an Ordinance Amending Chapter 2 – Administration, Article IX – Purchasing. First Reading – Chris Forster, Assistant Town Manager

A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve the first reading of the ordinance amending the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances, Chapter 2 – Administration, Article IX - Purchasing.

Town Council unanimously approved the first reading of this ordinance.

3. Consideration of Ordinance Amending Chapter 6 – Businesses and Business Regulations, Article III – Soliciting and Mobile Vending – First Reading – Natalie Majorkiewicz, Director of Finance & Administration

A motion made by Councilmember Burden; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve the ordinance amending the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances, Chapter 6, Business and Business Regulations, Article III, Soliciting and Mobile Vending as presented.

Town Council unanimously agreed to approve is ordinance amendment.

4. Consideration of an Ordinance Authorizing an Economic Development Incentive Agreement Between the Town of Bluffton and Sunshine Bluffton Group, LLC. First Reading – David Nelems, CEO of DRCI

A motion made by Councilmember Burden; Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve first reading of an ordinance authorizing the Town Manager to enter into an Economic Development Grant Agreement between the Town of Bluffton and Sunshine Bluffton Group, LLC for The Goddard School.

Town Council unanimously approved the first reading of this ordinance.

5. Approval to Authorize a Contract with Nix Construction Company, Inc. for the Reconstruction of the Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage (Fiscal Impact: \$943,448.00). Chris Forster, Assistant Town Manager

A motion made by Councilmember Frazier; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve authorizing the Town Manager to enter into a contract with Nix Construction, Inc. for the Reconstruction of the Sarah Riley Hooks Cottage in the amount of \$943,448.00, which includes a 10% contingency.

Town Council unanimously agreed to authorize the contract with Nix Construction, Inc.

6. Approval of Public Art Committee Recommendation to Award a Public Art Commission at Oyster Factory Park to Wesley Clark with a Fiscal Impact of \$65,000. Chris Forster, Assistant Town Manager

A motion made by Councilmember Frazier; Seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve the Public Art Committee recommendation to award the Public Art Commission at Oyster Factory Park to Wesley Clark (Fiscal Impact of \$65,000).

Town Council unanimously agreed to approve the award to Wesley Clark.

7. Consideration of an Ordinance to Amend the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23 - Unified Development Ordinance, Article 4, Section 4.3 Uses by District to Allow Schools in the Preserve (PR) District. First Reading - Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management

A motion made by Councilmember Burden; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve an amendment to the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances Chapter 23 – Unified Development Ordinance, Article 4, Zoning Districts, Table 4.3 (Uses by District) to add schools as a permitted use in the Preserve (“PR”) Zoning District as recommended by the Planning Commission.

Town Council unanimously approved the first reading of this ordinance.

8. Consideration of Ordinances for that Certain Real Property Owned by Beaufort County School District, Consisting of a Total of 24.12 Acres, More or Less, Located at 1105 Bluffton Parkway and Bearing Beaufort County Tax Map Nos. R600 029 000 011A 0000, R600 029 000 1736 0000 and R600 029 000 0034 0000 into the Town of Bluffton corporate limits. First Reading - Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management

For the Following Applications:

- A. Consideration of 100% Annexation Request to Annex the Subject Properties into the Town of Bluffton Corporate Limits

A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve the first reading of the Ordinance for the annexation of the Beaufort County School District Property consisting of a total of 24.12 Acres, more or less, located at 1105 Bluffton Parkway and Bearing Beaufort County Tax Map Nos. R600 029 000 011A 0000, R600 029 000 1736 0000 and R600 029 000 0034 0000 into the Town of Bluffton corporate limits.

Town Council unanimously approves the first reading of this ordinance.

B. Consideration of Zoning Map Amendment to Rezone the Subject Properties Listed Above AND R610 029 000 0012 0000 and R610 029 000 0084 0000 to the Preserve (PR) District

A motion made councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by councilmember Burden to approve the first reading of the ordinance for the amendment to the official zoning map for the Beaufort County School District property approximately 77.93 Acres, more or less, consisting of the 24.12 acres, more or less, located at 1105 Bluffton Parkway and bearing Beaufort County Tax Map Nos. R600 029 000 011A 0000, R600 029 000 1736 0000 and R600 029 000 0034 0000 which are under consideration for annexation as well as those adjacent properties consisting of the 53.731 acres, more or less, located at 3050 River Ridge Drive and bearing Beaufort County Tax Map Nos. R610 029 000 0012 0000, R610 029 000 0084 0000, R610 029 000 1780 0000, and R610 029 000 0612 0000 to the Preserve (PR) District Pursuant to the Unified Development Ordinance ("UDO").

Town Council unanimously approves the first reading of this ordinance.

9. Consideration of an Approval for the Initial Master Plan Request by University Investments, LLC, for Approval of an Initial Master Plan Application for Seven Contiguous Parcels Located Southwest of the Intersection of Buckwalter Parkway and Bluffton Parkway within the Buckwalter Planned Unit Development. Kevin Icard - Director of Growth Management

A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve the Parkway Corners Initial Master Plan subject to the following conditions:

1. All Plan Exhibits, including the Initial Master Plan and Concept Plan, shall be updated to identify the future realignment of the Bluffton Parkway west of Buckwalter Parkway as shown on the Buckwalter PUD Concept Master Plan. Nothing in this motion precludes any entity withstanding to apply to have the Buckwalter PUD Concept Plan Amended.
2. At time of development permit applications, any proposed development that substantially deviates from the approved Initial Master Plan, as determined by the UDO Administrator, may warrant a minor or major amendment to the Master Plan document.
3. Update the Narrative to reflect that the maximum height allowed in the Buckwalter Planned Unit Development is fifty (50') feet.
4. The final version of the Traffic Impact Analysis "TIA" will be accepted by Beaufort County prior to final Initial Master Plan approval, including all recommended improvements.
5. At time of Development Plan submittal for the Development Area "G" provide a secondary access point connecting to either the Buckwalter or Bluffton Parkway.
6. Prior to final Master Plan approval, create a phasing plan related to traffic improvements with associated phases of development.
7. Applicant will work with staff to work with utility companies to install landscaping where allowed with the easement areas along Buckwalter and Bluffton Parkways and meet all PUD setback and landscaping requirements.

Town Council unanimously approves the Initial Master Plan Request.

XI. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

A motion made by Councilmember Frazer; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve the Consent Agenda as submitted.

Town Council unanimously approved the consent agenda items 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 a Resolution Approving the Town of Bluffton Assessment District Roll for Tax Year 2025. Heather Colin, Assistant Town Manager
4. Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing Acceptance of Easement Donations from Property Owners Necessary to Complete a portion of the Public Safety Cameras Project. Kimberly Washok-Jones, Director of Projects and Watershed Resilience, and Joe Babkiewicz, Chief of Police
5. Kids to Parks Day Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer
6. Building Safety Month Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer
7. Public Service Employee Recognition Week Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer

XI. EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Discussions Relating to Arrangements for Proposed Land Acquisition in the Area within the Buckwalter PUD and Old Town (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70 [a] [2])
2. Personnel Matters Relating to Town Manager Annual Review (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70[a][1])
3. Receipt of Legal Advice Relative to Legal Investigation/Summary Concerning Sean Cecchini Affidavit and Related Subjects (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70[a][2])

XII. ACTION FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

The following action was taken at Executive Session:

1. Discussions Relating to Arrangements for Proposed Land Acquisition in the Area within the Buckwalter PUD and Old Town (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70 [a] [2])

Mooney Tract:

A motion made by Councilmember Burden; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to authorize the Town Manager to execute a purchase and sales agreement for the acquisition of property commonly referred to as the "Mooney Tract", referenced as tax map R610-022-000-1095-0000.

Town Council unanimously agreed to authorize the purchase and sales agreement for the acquisition of property.

Foothills Property

A motion made by Councilmember Burden; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to authorize the Town Manager to execute a purchase and sales agreement for the acquisition of property", referenced as tax map R610-030-000-1071-0000.

Town Council unanimously agreed to authorize the purchase and sales agreement for the acquisition of property.

2. Personnel Matters Relating to Town Manager Annual Review (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70[a][1])

This item has been moved to the June 10, 2025, Town Council Agenda due to Mayor Toomer being absent.

3. Receipt of Legal Advice Relative to Legal Investigation/Summary Concerning Sean Cecchini Affidavit and Related Subjects (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70[a][2])

A motion made by Councilmember Frazier; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton that Town Council and the Town of Bluffton, waive the attorney-client privilege relative to the Summary Report from Finger, Melnick, Brooks, and LaBruce, P.A. dated April 7, 2024, concerning the investigation of the affidavit for Sean Cecchini dated October 19, 2024.

Town Council unanimously agreed to waive the attorney-client privilege concerning the investigation.

XIII. ADJOURNMENT

A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by Councilmember Burden to adjourn the meeting at 9:03PM.

Marcia Hunter, Town Clerk
Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

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