

Regular Town Council Meeting

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

August 11, 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 Mayor Pro-tempore Hamilton.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

1. Regular Meeting Minutes of 07/21/2026

A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve the Quarterly Workshop Meeting Minutes of 07/21/2026.

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, recognized Isabella Kaspar, a second-grade student at Pritchardville Elementary School, as the Beaufort County School District's Character Student of the Month. Isabella was honored for demonstrating the character traits of responsibility and cooperation.

2. USCB Sand Shark Welcome Week Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer

Mayor Larry Toomer, on behalf of Town Council, presented a USCB Sand Shark Welcome Week Proclamation for the week of August 17-21. USCB senior and Student Council President Daniela Lopez accepted the proclamation on behalf of the university. The week celebrates the return of more than 2,200 students to the University of South Carolina Beaufort's regional campuses.

3. Flock Camera Presentation - Chief Joe Babkiewicz, Bluffton Police Department

Bluffton Police Chief Joseph Babkiewicz presented an overview of the history of the department's Flock camera operations and the accountability standards in place to ensure the technology is used appropriately. He also explained the role of the Law Enforcement Citizens Advisory Committee, which conducts audits of the department's Flock camera usage. Bluffton's accountability practices have been shared with other law enforcement agencies through national organizations as a model for responsible use.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Cheryl Rodriguez 11 Driftwood Ct. W - Mrs. Cheryl Rodriguez praised the Town's Events Planning Team for their efforts to make community events more accessible and welcoming for families with

children and young adults with special needs. She highlighted recent accommodations such as expanded special-needs parking and the availability of sensory bags. Ms. Rodriguez also praised staff for the successful Glow Dance held on August 1, which provided a supportive social experience for teens and young adults with special needs and was supported by local volunteers and businesses. She expressed appreciation on behalf of the special needs community for the Town's leadership and continued commitment to inclusivity.

Marie Kowalchuk 161 Pinecrest Circle - Ms. Marie Kowalchuk, representing the residents of Pinecrest, expressed appreciation for the Town Council's continued opposition to the proposed development of approximately 360 rental units—or any additional development—on the Pinecrest golf course property bordering the neighborhood. She described current traffic challenges affecting Pinecrest and surrounding communities due to increased development in the area and noted safety concerns for students attending nearby schools. Ms. Kowalchuk stated that additional rental housing is already available in the region and questioned the need for further units. She requested that the Town maintain its opposition to development on the driving range or golf course to protect community safety and preserve manageable traffic conditions.

Chris Campbell 47 Oak Grove Plantation Drive - Mr. Chris Campbell, Chairman of Keep Beaufort County Beautiful, spoke about ongoing environmental concerns related to single-use plastics, styrofoam, and litter. He noted that litter issues continue to worsen and increase cleanup costs, and he asked the Council to carefully consider upcoming discussions on reducing environmentally harmful materials. Mr. Campbell expressed appreciation for the opportunity to address the Council.

Bob Crimian 17 Norris Ave - Mr. Crimian thanked the Council for allowing him to speak and expressed appreciation for the Town's efforts related to environmental stewardship. He referenced the Beaufort County plastics ordinance and encouraged the Council to consider actions that support reducing environmentally harmful materials. He concluded by thanking the Council for their work on the issue.

John Acker 147 Station Parkway - Mr. Acker thanked the Mayor and Council for the opportunity to speak and expressed appreciation for the Police Department's presentation. He voiced support for the use of Flock cameras, stating he views them as a beneficial public safety tool rather than an invasion of privacy. Mr. Acker noted the Town's national recognition for its Citizen Advisory Panel and commended the transparency and community involvement it represents. He concluded by thanking the Council for supporting implementation of the Flock camera system.

Kaly Turkowsky 159 Lake Linden Drive - Ms. Turkowsky expressed her opposition to the Town's use of Flock cameras. She stated concerns about privacy, data collection, and the inability of residents to opt out of the system. Ms. Tarkowski referenced differences between Flock technology and other forms of personal data sharing, noting that Flock data is collected automatically and does not require a search warrant for police access. She also raised concerns about the role of artificial intelligence in processing and alerting law enforcement and cited examples of potential misuse and false alerts. Ms. Tarkowski concluded by reiterating her belief that the system poses constitutional and privacy concerns.

Ms. Joan Heyward 95 Boundary Street - Ms. Heyward, speaking on behalf of the Bluffton Historic Bluffton Foundation, thanked the Town and staff for including the item regarding the names of the contributing resources list on the agenda. She emphasized the importance of clear and accurate identification of contributing structures within the Bluffton Historic District. She noted that the Heyward House, built by John J. Cole around 1840, has been known as the Heyward House since 1882, when the Heyward family began residing there continuously until 1998. Ms. Heyward requested that the list of proposed historic names include the column titled "Proposed Name for Signage," with noted corrections, and asked that the Heyward House retain its long-recognized name in the proposed signage. She also expressed concern that several listings beginning with "Site of" do not represent contributing structures and should not be included, with the exception of the Bluffton Oyster Factory. She concluded by thanking the Council for its consideration and expressed willingness to collaborate toward a resolution.

Lisa Sulka 37 Stock Farm Rd - Ms. Sulka thanked the Police Department for its recent presentation and commended the agency for maintaining high professional standards, including its long-standing accreditation and recent meritorious award. Speaking as a member of the Historic Preservation Commission, Ms. Sulka offered several recommendations regarding the proposed historic resource renaming list. She requested that the Bluffton Historic Bluffton Foundation be included in reviewing and verifying proposed names; that the Heyward House retain its historic name; that "Site of" be removed from the Oyster Factory listing; and that several typographical errors be corrected. Ms. Sulka also encouraged Council to consider preservation recommendations outlined in the 2025 Stantec survey, particularly those related to supporting Bluffton's Black historic resources and evaluating individual landmark designations. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of preserving the Town's historic district.

Jen Sommerville 86 White Oaks Circle - Ms. Sommerville, Executive Director of the Historic Bluffton Foundation, underscored the importance of consistent and accurate naming for contributing historic structures. She noted that the Foundation maintains signage throughout the historic district and has delayed replacing certain signs to ensure alignment with the Town's officially recognized names. Ms. Sommerville stated that the Foundation works directly with property owners on sign wording and stressed the need for consensus between the Town and the Foundation to maintain consistent historic identification throughout Bluffton.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Councilmember Burden – Councilmember Burden requested Chief Babkiewicz to reach out to Kaly Turkowsky regarding the Flock presentation to address questions and concerns she may have.

Mayor Pro-tempore Hamilton - Mayor Pro-tempore Hamilton welcomed Lyndee Simoneaux back to work. No other communications were noted.

Councilmember Wood - Councilmember Wood congratulated Chief Babkiewicz and the Police Department on achieving an enhanced level of accreditation, recognizing the extensive work involved in the process. Appreciation was also expressed for staff efforts related to recent community initiatives, including programs supporting individuals with special needs and the successful drone show at New Riverside, which drew significant public participation. Staff were commended for their continued dedication to fostering community engagement.

Councilmember Frazier - No comments were noted from Councilmember Frazier.

Mayor Toomer – Mayor Toomer thanked staff, council, and the community for their continued hard work and commitment. He acknowledged the wide range of public opinions that arise on various issues and encouraged everyone to stay focused on doing what is right for the Town. He expressed pride in being part of the team and appreciation for the collective efforts of all involved.

VIII. WORKSHOP AGENDA ITEMS

1. Presentation and Input on Draft Operational Branding Designs - Stephen Steese, Town Manager

Town Manager Stephen Steese presented options for an “operational” logo and brand for the Town of Bluffton. The operational logo would complement the Town’s two existing brands, each of which serves a different purpose.

The Town seal would continue to be reserved for official government business, such as ordinances, proclamations and property-related documents. The “Bluffton: The Heart of the Lowcountry” logo would continue to serve as the Town’s marketing brand, primarily used to promote Bluffton to audiences outside the community.

The new operational logo would be used for the Town’s day-to-day communications and operations, including permits, plans and other materials. It would also provide consistent identification of Town employees and operations on Town vehicles, equipment and other applications.

Town Council directed staff to generate more options.

2. Consideration and Direction on Proposed Amendments to the Town of Bluffton Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 12. Environment, Article VI. Regulations and Requirements Relating to the Use of Single-Use Plastic Bags in the Town of Bluffton - Heather Colin, Assistant Town Manager

Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management, discussed the ordinance with Town Council in lieu of Heather Colin. Icard emphasized the importance of having consistent ordinances throughout the region to support uniform enforcement across Beaufort County. He also reviewed the proposed timeline for implementing the ordinance, noting that it is contingent upon the other municipalities in Beaufort County adopting parallel ordinances.

IX. PUBLIC HEARING & FINAL READING

1. Consideration of an Ordinance to Amend the Town of Bluffton's Municipal 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) - Public Hearing and Final Reading - Andrea Moreno, Watershed Division Manager

A motion was made Councilmember Wood and seconded by Mayor Pro-Tempore Hamilton to approve the second and final reading to Amend the Town of Bluffton's Municipal 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.

2. Consideration of an Ordinance for Certain Amendments to the Town of Bluffton's Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23, Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), Article 3 – Application Process, Sec. 3.18, Certificate of Appropriateness-Historic District and Sec. 3.19, Site Feature-Historic District Permit, Related to Relocation and Demolition of Non-contributing Resources in Old Town Bluffton Historic District - Public Hearing and Final Reading - Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management

A motion was made Councilmember Burden and seconded by Mayor Pro-tempore Hamilton to approve the second and final reading for certain amendments to the Town of Bluffton's Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23, Unified Development Ordinance (UDO), Article 3 – Application Process, Sec. 3.18, Certificate of Appropriateness-Historic District and Sec. 3.19, Site Feature-Historic District Permit, Related to Relocation and Demolition of Non-contributing Resources in Old Town Bluffton Historic District.

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

X. FORMAL AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consideration of a Resolution to Update the Names on the Contributing Resource List to Accurately Reflect the Names of the Resources as Defined by the National Parks Service - Glen Umberger, Historic Preservationist

A motion was made by Councilmember Burden and seconded by Mayor Pro-tempore Hamilton to table this agenda item until the list can be reviewed by staff, the Bluffton Historic Foundation and the Historic Preservation Committee to refine the list for preservation.

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

XI. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

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 an Agreement with Beaufort Water Search and Rescue for Partial Reimbursement of a New Rescue Vessel and Formalization of Coordinated Rescue Efforts - Stephen Steese, Town Manager
4. Approval of a Three-Year Contract Renewal with Holding Seven Community Development Corporation for Public Parking - Stephen Steese, Town Manager
5. Consideration of an Ordinance to Amend the Town of Bluffton's Municipal Code of Ordinances, Chapter 13 - Public Property, Article II. Public Park, Dock and Boat Landing Rules to include Dock Rules for the New Riverside Trail - First Reading - Heather Colin - Assistant Town Manager

Motion 1 - Mayor Pro-tempore Hamilton moved to remove Consent Agenda Item 5 for further discussion. Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

Motion 2 - A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and was seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve Consent Agenda Items 1-4.

Mayor Pro-tempore Hamilton recused himself from Consent Agenda Item 4.

Town Council approved and the motion passed.

Motion 3 - A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and was seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve Consent Agenda Item 5.

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Discussions Relating to Authorizing the Town Manager to Negotiate a Contractual Agreement Between the Town and Affordable Housing Developer (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70 [a] [2])

A motion was made by Councilmember Wood and was seconded by Councilmember Burden to move into Executive Session.

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

XIII. ACTION FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

No motion or actions were taken.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

A motion made by Councilmember Wood and seconded by Councilmember Burden to adjourn the meeting at 7:56 PM.

Town Council unanimously approved and the motion passed.

Marcia Hunter, Town Clerk
Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

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