

Regular Town Council Meeting

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

March 11, 2025

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 given by Councilmember Hamilton.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

1. Regular Meeting Minutes of 02/11/2025

A motion made by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood; Seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of 02/11/2025 as submitted.

2. Special Joint Town Council and Law Enforcement Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 02/13/2025

A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve the Special Joint Town Council and Law Enforcement Citizens Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes 02/13/2025 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 Larry Toomer honored the student of the month, Ella Gourlay. Ms. Gourlay is a 4th grade student from Red Cedar Elementary School. She is recognized for the character trait of Perseverance.

Beaufort County School District staff attended the meeting to recognize Ella Gourlay: Dr. Corley, Rebecca Hannahs, and Ms. Frieden Ella's teacher.

2. General Federation of Women's Clubs Women's League of the Lowcountry 10th Anniversary - Mayor Larry Toomer

Mayor Larry Toomer, on behalf of Town Council, presented a proclamation to the General Federation of Women's Clubs Women's League of the Lowcountry to member Phyllis Sipple honoring the GFCW 10th Anniversary.

3. Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month - Mayor Larry Toomer

Mayor Larry Toomer presented Charlotte Lewis, a representative of SOAR Special Recreation, a proclamation honoring Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

Mayor Larry Toomer presented Lynn Russo, a representative from Beaufort County Board of Disabilities and Special Needs, a proclamation honoring Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month.

4. Beaufort County Military Enhancement Committee (MEC) - Emmett McCracken

Former Mayor Emmett McCracken, a member of the Beaufort County Military Enhancement Committee, presented to Town Council the objectives and activities of the Committee. The committee's mission is to enhance and support the value of military installments in Beaufort County.

5. Utility Updates - Dominion Energy and Palmetto Electric Cooperative

- Dominion Energy - Transmission Line Upgrade - Blakely Williams, Economic Development and Local Affairs Manager
- Palmetto Electric Cooperative - Tree Trimming - Ashley Feaster, Community Affairs and Economic Development

Dominion Energy - Transmission Line Upgrade - Blakely Williams, Economic Development and Local Affairs Manager

Blakely Williams spoke to Town Council regarding the process of Dominion Energy replacing existing wooden poles to self-supporting galvanized steel poles, to enhance its infrastructure. These will be built on existing right of ways. Dominion Energy will be in Bluffton in mid-March and be completed by the end of July.

Palmetto Electric Cooperative - Tree Trimming - Ashley Feaster, Community Affairs and Economic Development

Ashley Feaster spoke to Town Council about Palmetto Electric's tree trimming schedule which happens every four (4) years. Utility companies periodically have to trim trees for public/employee safety and to eliminate factors which could affect the utility's reliability.

VI. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tyler Rice - 121 Pinecrest Drive - Mr. Rice, a student with USCB and an intern with HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce, spoke of a program creating jobs entitled Lowcountry Jobs Now. Their mission is to expand the workforce in the area with six named focus groups as prime candidates for potential employment.

Barrett Collins - 12 Red Cedar Street - Ms. Collins spoke to the council expressing her passion to address solving a community problem by creating a program/committee to address sober living houses and an AA club house South of the Broad River. A meeting date has been requested for further discussion.

Krista Flanders - 21 Rivertree Circle - Ms. Flanders shared her journey of sober living and recovery options. She also expressed concerns and recognized the need for options in addressing addiction recovery within our community.

Sharon Brown - 163 Buck Island Road - Ms. Brown made clarifying statements to address statements made at the previous town council meeting regarding police response to an accident

scene. She also expressed concerns/comments regarding police procedure and collecting data from additional municipalities for additional clarification.

Carolyn Brown - 1111 May River Road - Ms. Brown addressed the council regarding her continued concerns of mobile homes being placed on land after dark, without permits, and an excessive amount of homes being placed on the acreage in the area of Buck Island Road. She expressed frustration with rules applying to some and not all.

Bruce Trimber - 5788 Yaupan Rd - Mr. Trimber introduced himself as the newly appointed Interim Executive Director of the Historic Bluffton Foundation at the Heyward House.

Lynn Greeley - 21 Lavington Rd, HHI - Ms. Greeley has requested Town Council consider conducting a forensic audit of the fiscal year audit. She made recommendations as to whom be hired to facilitate the task. She expressed comments regarding corruption from council and staff. Greeley went on to discuss topics related to the Town of Hilton Head.

Skip Hoagland - 61 Sparwheel Ln, HHI - Mr. Hoagland expressed his displeasure with the Hilton Head Chamber of Commerce, operations, items related to accommodations taxes and other areas stated as violating federal law.

VII. COMMUNICATIONS FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Council Member Frazier - Ms. Frazier took a moment to dispel public misinformation when it happens as public officials. Contrary to the public comments made, she commended the wonderful job the finance team has done. She stated Bluffton is 1 of 5 municipalities in the state of South Carolina with a AAA Moody's Bond Rating and in 2022 accredited as 1 of 7 in the US and Canada to be recognized with GFAO's Certificate of Achievement of Excellence in Financial Reporting. She advised that the Finance Department does act as good stewards of taxpayer funds and everything we do is public knowledge. Frazier stated along with herself, none of her colleagues, members of council or staff are involved in anything negligible that has been alleged.

Frazier also recognized Women's History Month. She asked that we each take a moment to celebrate and highlight the amazing women in our lives. She thanked all women on staff and with her on the dais for the work that is done.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood - Mr. Wood added to statements made by Ms. Frazier. He stated the Town of Bluffton was one of the first to move information online to be audited and looked at any time by anyone. Kudos to staff for a job well done.

Mr. Wood went on to state the ribbon cutting at the New Riverside Park Playground was unbelievable. He expressed his excitement for the people and stated he has never seen anything quite like it.

Councilmember Burden - Ms. Burden stated it has been a year since she has served with those on the dais. She wanted to thank all of council and staff for everything in the last year.

VIII. WORKSHOP AGENDA ITEMS

IX. PUBLIC HEARING

1. Consideration of an Ordinance to Amend the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23 - Unified Development Ordinance, Article 5 - Design Standards, Sec. 5.4 (Wetlands) and

Sec. 5.10 (Stormwater); and Article 9 - Definitions and Interpretation, Sec. 9.2 (Defined Terms) - Public Hearing & First Reading - Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management

A motion made by councilmember Burden; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve via pending doctrine the first reading of this ordinance amendment. Council also asked for staff to coordinate with those who spoke at public hearing to clarify the ordinance's wording. This ordinance is a response to the U.S. Supreme Court's Sackett case which weakened federal wetlands protection which shifted more regulatory control to state and local governments.

Town Council unanimously approved via pending doctrine the first reading of this ordinance amendment.

X. FORMAL AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consideration of the Acceptance of the Beaufort County School District's One Hundred Percent (100%) Annexation Petition to Annex Certain Real Property Contiguous to the Town of Bluffton's Corporate Boundaries Consisting of a Total of 24.1 Acres, More or Less, Located at 1105 Bluffton Parkway and Bearing Beaufort County Tax Map Nos. R600 029 000 011A 0000 and R600 029 000 0034 0000. - Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management

A motion made by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood; Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve the Beaufort County School District's One Hundred Percent (100%) Annexation petitions to annex certain real properties contiguous to the Town of Bluffton's corporate boundaries consisting of a total of 24.1 Acres, more or less, and bearing Beaufort County Tax Map Nos. R600 029 000 011A 0000 and R600 029 000 0034 0000.

Town Council unanimously approved the Beaufort County School District's One Hundred Percent (100%) Annexation Petition request.

A motion made by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood; Seconded by Councilmember Burden to forgo referral of Beaufort County School District's One Hundred Percent (100%) Annexation Petition to the Town of Bluffton Negotiating Committee.

Town Council, in a 3-2 vote, decided to forgo the referral of the petition to the negotiating committee.

Voting Yea: Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood, Councilmember Frazier and Councilmember Burden

Voting Nay: Mayor Toomer and Councilmember Hamilton

2. Consideration of a Resolution to Approve Amendments to the Town of Bluffton's Southern Lowcountry Stormwater Design Manual - Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management and Kimberly Washok- Jones, Director of Projects and Watershed Resilience

A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood to approve the Resolution to amend the Town of Bluffton's Southern Lowcountry Stormwater Design Manual, as presented.

Town Council unanimously approved the resolution amendment.

3. Approval to Authorize a Construction Contract with Hilton Head Landscapes LLC for Site Development Construction of Buckwalter Place Park (Fiscal Impact: \$648,848.30) - Kimberly Washok-Jones, Director of Projects and Watershed Resilience

A motion made by Councilmember Frazier; Seconded by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood to approve authorizing the Town Manager to enter into a contract with Hilton Head Landscapes LLC for Site Development Construction of Buckwalter Place Park in the amount of \$648,848.30, which includes a 10% contingency.

Town Council unanimously approved the authorization of the construction contract.

4. Consideration of Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Funding Recommendations for Quarter Ending December 30, 2024 - Chris Forster, Assistant Town Manager

A. The Rotary Club of Bluffton Requesting \$24,000

B. Amending ATAX Application Guidelines to Include Cultural and Civic Facilities Expenses Language

A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to grant The Rotary Club of Bluffton \$24,000 in support of the 2025 MayFest Weekend in Bluffton project as presented in the Staff Report breakdown for advertising and promotion of tourism and other tourism-related expenses.

The motion passed with four members voting. Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood recused himself from this item.

A motion made by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to amend the accommodations tax application guidelines for the following:

Adding personnel expenses, to include salaries and wages, as ineligible tourism-related expenditures to the Notes and Guidelines section of the Town of Bluffton's Accommodations Tax Application.

Capping operational expenditures related to cultural and civic facilities to no more than 25% annually or at the documented annual percentage of tourist attendance, whichever is less, with the maximum annual amount not to exceed \$50,000.

Town Council unanimously approved the amendment.

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

A motion made by Councilmember Frazier; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve consent items 1-4 as submitted and remove Consent Item 5 from for further discussion.

This motion was unanimously approved.

A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by Councilmember Burden to approve consent item 5. Consideration of an ordinance and ratification of an easement over certain real property owned by the Town of Bluffton, identified as Beaufort County Tax Map

No. R610 039 000 0498 0000, in favor of Dominion Energy South Carolina, Inc. to provide service to 1095 May River Road.

Town Council unanimously approved the ratification of the easement servicing 1095 May River Road.

2. Town Manager Monthly Report
3. Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing the Town Manager to Finalize an Encroachment Agreement Necessary to Complete the Approved New River Linear Trail Project - Kimberly Washok-Jones, Director of Projects and Watershed Resilience
4. Consideration of a Proposed Lighting Agreement with Dominion Energy for the Sarah Riley Hooks Project (Fiscal Impact: \$35,080.85 over a 10-year term) - Kimberly Washok-Jones, Director of Projects and Watershed Resilience
5. Consideration of an Ordinance and Ratification of an Easement Over Certain Real Property owned by the Town of Bluffton, Identified as Beaufort County Tax Map No. R610 039 000 0498 0000, in favor of Dominion Energy South Carolina, Inc. to Provide Service to 1095 May River Road – Heather Colin, Assistant Town Manager

XII. EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Discussion of Proposed Contractual Matters Regarding an Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) between the Town of Bluffton, and Beaufort-Jasper Water and Sewer Authority. (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70[a][2])

A motion made by Councilmember Frazier; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to enter Executive Session.

XIII. ACTION FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

A motion made by Councilmember Burden; Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve a resolution in support of allocating a portion of the Town of Bluffton's water and wastewater capacity credits for the Alljoy Sewer Expansion Project to promote public health and environmental safety in the community.

Town Council unanimously agreed to approve the resolution.

XIV. ADJOURNMENT

At motion made by councilmember Hamilton; Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 PM.

Marcia Hunter, Town Clerk

Town of Bluffton, South Carolina

Larry C. Toomer, Mayor

Town of Bluffton, South Carolina