

Regular Town Council Meeting

June 13, 2023

Call to Order

Mayor Sulka called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM. Council members present were Larry Toomer, Bridgette Frazier, Fred Hamilton, and Dan Wood. Town Manager Stephen Steese, Assistant Town Manager Heather Colin, Assistant Town Manager Chris Forster, Chief of Police Joe Babkiewicz, Town Clerk Marcia Hunter, Interim Town Clerk Kerry Guzman and Town Attorney Terry Finger were also present.

The pledge and invocation were given by Mayor Sulka.

Adoption of the Agenda

Toomer made a motion to adopt the agenda as presented. Wood seconded.

Adoption of the Minutes

1. Regular Meeting Minutes of May 9, 2023

Wood made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of May 9, 2023, as presented. Frazier seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

2. Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes of May 25, 2023

Toomer made a motion to approve the Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes of May 25, 2023, as presented. Wood seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes of May 30, 2023

Frazier made a motion to approve the Budget Workshop Meeting Minutes of May 30, 2023, as presented. Toomer seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

Presentations, Celebrations and Recognitions

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

Mayor Sulka, on behalf of the Town Council, honored Avery Rodgers, a freshman at May River High School, for the character trait forgiveness.

2. Juneteenth Proclamation – Mayor Sulka

Selena Chisolm, a representative of the Bluffton MLK Observance, accepted this proclamation and described the upcoming weekend's activities, celebrating Juneteenth.

3. National Gun Violence Awareness Day Proclamation - Mayor Sulka

Richard Hammes accepted National Gun Violence Awareness Day Proclamation.

4. Hilton Head Island - Bluffton Chamber of Commerce Presentation - Tom Henz

Mr. Henz was unavailable, and the Chamber of Commerce presentation will be rescheduled.

Public Comment

Prior to Public Comment, Mayor Sulka advised the Council had requested the Town Attorney get an opinion from the Attorney General on the strengthening of the rules for the public comment since being at the Municipal Association. The opinion has been published on the Attorney General website. The rules are within the jurisdiction of what can be enforced.

Andrew Kiehle - 22 Trail Ridge Retreat, Bluffton - Mr. Kiehle expressed his concerns about the Midpoint Subdivision being constructed by Pulte Home Company, LLC. Mr. Kiehle had questions regarding the process and steps to be followed in the development review process. Mayor Sulka had requested Assistant Town Manager Heather Colin contact Mr. Kiehle to further discuss concerns, answer any questions and address the procedure in place.

Robert Jones - 22 Bridle Path Lane, Bluffton - Mr. Jones is the Executive Director of the Historic Bluffton Foundation. Mr. Jones representing the foundation in support of the renewal of the MOU and to share the statistics of guest attendance.

Skip Hoagland - 61 Sparwheel Lane, Hilton Head Island - Mr. Hoagland approached the podium and addressed Mayor Sulka, advising there is a need for a Law Compliance Pledge. He proceed to discuss the previous lawsuit with Mayor Sulka.

Lynne Greeley - Mr. Skip Hoagland began speaking, stating he was there to submit a POA for Ms. Greeley, whom is not in attendance. An exchange occurred between Hoagland and Mayor Sulka resulting in Hoagland being advised he was out of order. Public comment time was called to close. Mr. Hoagland was escorted out of Council Chambers by Bluffton Police Department.

Communications from Mayor and Council

Council Member Bridgette Frazier thanked the Town of Bluffton for the support shown with the upcoming Juneteenth events weekend. She also shared the benefit information for the Ben Frazier family who are the victims of a structure fire at their home.

Mayor Sulka shared the information regarding the mobile mammography screening being offered free to the public on June 21, 2023.

Consent Agenda Items

Wood made a motion to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Toomer seconded. The motion carried unanimously.

1. Monthly Department Reports: Police, Finance and Administration, Human Resources, Municipal Court, Projects and 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 2023 - Heather Colin, Assistant Town Manager
4. Hilton Head Island Bluffton Chamber of Commerce FY23 Quarterly Report - Ariana Pernice, Hilton Head Island Bluffton Chamber of Commerce
5. Consideration to Approve a Resolution for Execution of Memorandums of Agreement Renewals Between the Town of Bluffton and Intergovernmental Entity the Beaufort County

School District for School Resource Officers and Crossing Guards – Chris Forster, Assistant Town Manager

6. Consideration to Approve a Resolution for Execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement Renewal between the Town of Bluffton and the Public Defenders Office - Chris Forster, Assistant Town Manager
7. Consideration of Memorandums of Agreement Renewals Between the Town of Bluffton and Intergovernmental Entities and Non-Profits Including the Historic Bluffton Foundation for Welcome Center Services and University of SC Beaufort for the Bluffton Ambassador Program – Chris Forster, Assistant Town Manager
8. Consideration of a Resolution to Adopt an Amendment to the Bylaws for the Don Ryan Center for Innovation Board of Directors - David Nelems, CEO, DRCI
9. Consideration of Approval for License Agreement Renewal with Environmental Systems Research Institute, Inc (ESRI) for Geographic Information System (GIS) software for three-year term (\$39,700 per year). – Tracye Stormer, Chief Technology Officer
10. Consideration of a Resolution Authorizing the Approval of a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) between the University of South Carolina Beaufort and the Town of Bluffton for Water Quality Laboratory Services (Fiscal Impact: \$185,000.00) – Kimberly Washok-Jones, Director of Projects and Watershed Resilience

Public Hearing & Final Reading

1. Consideration of an Ordinance Approving the Town of Bluffton Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Consolidated Budget – Public Hearing and Final Reading – Stephen Steese, Town Manager

Toomer made a motion to approve the request to amend the Town of Bluffton Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Consolidated Budget with the main changes from the First Reading. Wood seconded.

Town Council unanimously approved the final reading of the Fiscal Year 2024 Proposed Consolidated Budget. Changes from the First Reading are as follows:

The General Fund increased \$400,000 for the Neighborhood Assistance Program.

Local Accommodations Tax increase by \$294,490.

Capital Improvements Program increased by \$63,900.

Total consolidated increase s \$758,390 with \$303,525 being interfund transfers.

Formal Agenda Items

1. Consideration of a Resolution for the FY2024 Budget and Marketing Plan Presented by the Hilton Head Island-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce in Accordance with Contract 2022-35 as the Town of Bluffton's Designated Marketing Organization – Natalie Majorkiewicz, Director of Finance

Hamilton made a motion to approve the resolution for the FY2024 Budget an Marketing Plan presented by the Hilton Head - Bluffton Chamber of Commerce. Wood seconded. Town

Council unanimously approved the resolution for the FY2024 Budget and Marketing Plan in accordance with Contract 2022-35 as the Town's Designated marketing Organization.

2. Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Funding Recommendations for Quarter Ending March 31, 2023 – Natalie Majorkiewicz, Director of Finance

Toomer made a motion to approve the request from Society of Bluffton Artists - \$15,000. Toomer seconded. Town Council unanimously approved.

Wood made a motion to approve the request from Hilton Head Symphony Orchestra / 2023 Bluffton Concerts - \$48,628. Events shall include - Outdoor Pops Concert - Historic Bluffton Arts & Seafood Festival and Holiday Pops Concert - St. Gregory the Great Catholic Church. Toomer seconded. Town Council unanimously approved.

Hamilton made a motion to approve the request from the Historic Bluffton Foundation / Welcome Center - Heywood House - \$150,000. Toomer seconded. Town Council unanimously approved.

Hamilton made a motion to approve the request from the Bluffton MLK Observance Committee / Juneteenth Activities - \$20,000. Toomer seconded. Town Council unanimously approved with Council member Bridgette Frazier recusing herself.

Toomer made a motion to approve the request from BlaQuity SC / Presented as Roots & River Festival - \$11,000. Wood seconded. Town Council unanimously approved with Council member Bridgette Frazier recusing herself.

3. Consideration of a Resolution to Procure an Emergency Standby Generator for Town Hall. - Derrick Coaxum, Director of Public Services

Toomer made a motion to approve the resolution to procure an Emergency Standby Generator for emergency incidents to be housed at Town Hall - \$154,802.20. Hamilton seconded. Town Council unanimously approved.

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

Action from Executive Session

Action from Executive Session:

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

Motion to appoint and reappoint the following to the Town's Boards, Commissions and Committees with all terms expiring June 30, 2026.

Town Council unanimously approved the following appointments:

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

Darlene Heinig and Jessica Palladino to the Beautification Committee.

Latoya Salters, Kevin Ryan, Walter Nester, and Edward Taylor to the Don Ryan Center for Innovation Board.

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

Tim Dolnik, Paul Reinhard, Gerald Workman, and Lawrence Garrison to the Board of Zoning Appeals.

Kari Miller, Joseph Nix, and Robert Marino to the Construction Board of Adjustments and Appeals.

Joseph DePauw, Debbie Wunder, James Hess, and Carletha Frazier to the Historic Preservation Commission.

John Michael Brock and Lydia DePauw to the Planning Commission.

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

Mayor Sulka requested a motion to increase the annual salary of Town Manager, Stephen Steese, which corresponds with the study conducted for Town Managers, to \$174,473.05. The increase shall be effective immediately. Toomer made the motion. Hamilton seconded.

Toomer made a motion to give a bonus of \$10,000, payable on the next pay cycle, for a job much improved and exceeding the expectations of council. Frazier seconded.

Sulka, Wood, Toomer and Frazier voted yea. Hamilton voted nay. The motion passed 4 -1.

Adjournment

Frazier made a motion for adjournment at 7:30 PM. Toomer seconded. The motion carried unanimously.