

TOWN COUNCIL

STAFF REPORT

Executive Session – Privileged and Confidential



MEETING DATE:	August 12, 2025
PROJECT:	Ordinance Amending Chapter 2 and Chapter 21 of the Town Code as Related to the Declaration of a Local Civil Emergency and Other Matters Related Thereto
PROJECT MANAGER:	Stephen Steese, Town Manager

REQUEST:

Town Manager requests Town Council to approve the amendments to Chapters 2 and 21 to outline the necessary and proper actions to declare a civil emergency event. The edits will define a Local Civil Emergency (LCE), incidents that qualify as an LCE, steps to declare an LCE, and authority of Council and the Manager during and after an LCE is declared.

BACKGROUND:

The Town of Bluffton adopted Chapter 2, Article VII – Emergency Management in 2008 and Chapter 21 – Emergency Permitting Procedures in 2009. These remained in the Code of Ordinances until they were combined in 2023 in Chapter 21 – Emergency Management (Civil Emergencies).

Chapters 2 and 21 until 2023 and Chapter 21 since 2023 have outlined:

- What classifies as an emergency.
- How an emergency is declared, extended, amended, and terminated.
- Roles of the Mayor, Council, Manager, Emergency Manager, and other staff during an emergency.
- Regulations that are suspended and authority that is granted during an emergency.
- Inspection, permits, and other related items to response and remediation.

Questions were raised to the Town Manager and Town Attorney on the declaration process, state law, and direction to address any discrepancies.

The proposed edits would amend Chapter 2 to:

- Add (b) Local Civil Emergency Procurement (LCE) under Section 2-274 – Emergency Procurements.
 - This section would be triggered by the declaration of an LCE and outlines the reporting of any such procurements to Council within 90 days.

The proposed edits would amend Chapter 21 to:

- Define Local Civil Emergencies (LCE).
- Address how LCEs are declared, extended, amended, and terminated.

- Require Town Council to approve LCEs prior to the declaration through an Emergency Meeting when possible.
 - Should a quorum of Council not be able to meet within 2 hours, the Mayor may declare, but Council should meet no later than 48 hours to confirm, amend, or terminate.
- Outline the powers of the Town Manager to respond to the Emergency.
- Make some grammatical and terminology edits to the preparation and permitting for recovery section of Chapter 21.

NEXT STEPS:

- Should Council approve First Reading at the August 12th meeting, Second and Final Reading would be at the September 9th meeting. The Ordinance would go into effect upon approval of Second Reading by Council.

ATTACHMENTS:

1. Ordinance
2. Exhibit A – Strikethrough and Amended language
3. Potential Motion