

Regular Town Council Meeting

March 12, 2024

This meeting can be viewed live on [BCTV](#) on Hargray Channel 9 and 113 or on Spectrum Channel 1304.

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Toomer called the meeting to order at 5:05 PM.

PRESENT

Mayor Larry Toomer

Mayor Pro-Tempore Dan Wood

Councilmember Fred Hamilton

Councilmember Bridgette Frazier

Councilmember Emily Burden

II. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE AND INVOCATION

The Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation were presented by Councilmember Hamilton.

III. Swearing In and Seating of Council - Municipal Judge Clifford Bush III

Municipal Judge Clifford Bush III administered the oath for the Swearing In and Seating of elected Councilmember Emily Burden. Burden will fill the remaining term of Larry Toomer's council seat. Larry Toomer was elected mayor of Bluffton.

IV. ADOPTION OF THE AGENDA

Motion made by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood to amend the agenda to reflect the removal of item - XIV. Executive Session, Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton.

V. ADOPTION OF THE MINUTES

Regular Meeting Minutes of 02/13/2024

Motion was made by Councilmember Hamilton, Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of 02/13/2024 as presented.

VI. 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, honored Chase Hutcheon, a 2nd grader from Bluffton Elementary, for the character trait of perseverance.

2. Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month Proclamation - Mayor Larry Toomer

Mayor Larry Toomer, on behalf of Town Council, presented a proclamation declaring March Developmental Disabilities Awareness Month. The proclamation was received by Beaufort County Disabilities and Special Needs Board Member, Wendy Bukowski.

3. 2024 SC Chef Ambassador Leslie Rohland - Mayor Larry Toomer

This presentation is postponed until next month's Town Council meeting.

4. Beaufort County Transportation Update for the Transportation Impact Analysis Ordinance (TIA) Ordinance and the Buckwalter Access Management Plan for Phase 2, Lake Point Drive to Barton's Run Crossing - Jared Fralix, Assistant County Administrator, Infrastructure

Jared Fralix, Assistant County Administrator, presented an update to Town Council regarding the Transportation Impact Analysis Ordinance. Fralix also discussed the proposed Access Management Plan for the southern portion of Buckwalter. Beaufort County Council is expected to approve, and this plan will be presented to Bluffton Town Council for approval as well.

VIII. PUBLIC COMMENT

Sharon Brown – 163 Buck Island Rd – Ms. Brown discussed the recent arrest of Councilmember Frazier. She requested an investigation be conducted and any wrongdoing be addressed.

Mike Raymond – 5827 Ginkgo Lane – Mr. Raymond discussed the expansion of town council seats from 5 to 7 seats to have better representation for the Town of Bluffton.

IX. COMMUNICATIONS FROM MAYOR AND COUNCIL

Councilmember Frazier addressed the incident that had occurred. She stated she will be vindicated and seeking justice for the actions. Frazier thanked those who have reached out offering support to her and her family.

Councilmember Wood congratulated the Don Ryan Center for Innovation for winning an award at the 2024 Golden Oyster Awards.

Councilmember Hamilton welcomed Councilmember Emily Burden to council.

Mayor Toomer addressed Councilmember Frazier stating the situation is being looked into. The information is being collected and discussions will be occurring to see if there are changes that need to be made and what all is involved with the situation.

X. WORKSHOP AGENDA ITEMS

1. Presentation on Opioid Settlement Funds and Proposed Uses - Chief Joseph Babkiewicz, Bluffton Police Department

Chief Babkiewicz presented proposed usage for the Town's portion of the Opioid Settlement for South Carolina. The Town will receive between \$25,000- \$30,000 annually to support allowable use of these funds.

Chief Babkiewicz has identified four areas to direct these funds:

- 1 - Detox/recovery/rehabilitation center information and aid
- 2 - Narcan availability and affordability
- 3 - Education for young adults
- 4 - Education/support for families of addicts.

Babkiewicz also identified two resources to distribute funds to meet the above-mentioned areas; proposing \$10,400.96 be given to Lowcountry Alliance for Healthy Youth for prevention programs and \$20,000 to Beaufort County First Responders for bulk Narcan purchase.

Krista Flanders, who is eight years sober, also spoke to Town Council; saying her life was saved with Narcan and put her on a path to recovery. Flanders is working closely with the Bluffton Police Department to identify how Bluffton Police Department can be of most help to addicts and their families.

2. Consideration and Direction on Amendments to the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances and Plans - Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management

2a. Amendments to the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23, Unified Development Ordinance – Traffic Impact Analysis

2b. Amendments to the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances, Chapter 23, Unified Development Ordinance – Wetland Buffers

2c. Amendments to the Comprehensive Plan (Blueprint Bluffton) – Housing Analysis to Use ATAX Funds to Support Workforce/Affordable Housing

2d. Expiration of the Bluffton Village Development Agreement

Town Council requested to move up the timeline and have the first reading of these amendments in June versus July.

XI. PUBLIC HEARING & FINAL READING

No Public Hearing & Final Reading

XII. FORMAL AGENDA ITEMS

1. Consideration of an Ordinance to Amend Chapter 26 – Traffic and Motor Vehicles, Article VII. – Towing and Wrecker Services – First Reading – Chief Joe Babkiewicz, Bluffton Police Department

Chief Babkiewicz recommended changes to the Town's Towing Ordinance and Fee Schedule. The recommendations arose from a review of the Ordinance and meeting with local towing contractors. Town Council also heard from the owners of Morris Garage and Sammie's Garage.

Motion made by Councilmember Hamilton, Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve the First Reading with the amendment with the removal of Section 26-173, paragraph G.

Town Council unanimously approved the first reading of this ordinance with changes.

2. Consideration of Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee Funding Recommendations for Quarter Ending December 31, 2023 - Natalie Majorkiewicz, Director of Finance

2a. A motion made by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood, Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve the recommended \$45,000 ATAC funds requested from HHI-Bluffton Chamber of Commerce for the 2024 Official Bluffton Vacation Planner. Town Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

2b. A motion made by Councilmember Frazier, Seconded by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood to approve the recommended \$9,750 ATAC funds requested by Gullah Traveling Theater, Inc, for "Gullah Kinfolk Come to Bluffton." Town Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

2c. A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton, Seconded by Councilmember Frazier to approve the recommended \$28,500 ATAC funds requested by Old Town Bluffton Merchants Society for the 2024 Bluffton as a Destination. Town Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

2d. A motion made by Councilmember Hamilton, Seconded by Mayor Toomer to approve the recommended \$25,000 ATAC funds requested by The Rotary Club of Bluffton for Mayfest 2024. Town Council unanimously approved the recommendation.

Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood recused himself from this item due to a conflict of interest.

3. Consideration of an Ordinance for Certain Amendments to the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances Chapter 23 – Unified Development Ordinance, Including Amendments to Article 3 – Application Process, Sec. 3.13 (Development Surety and Stormwater Surety), Sec. 3.14 (Certificate of Construction Compliance), Sec. 3.18 (Certificate of Appropriateness-Historic District), Sec. 3.19 (Site Feature-Historic District Permit); and, Sec. 3.25 (Designation of Contributing Resources); Article 4 – Zoning Districts, Table 4.3 (Uses by District); Article 5 – Design Standards, Sec. 5.10 (Stormwater); 5.11 (Parking); and, Sec. 5.15 (Old Town Bluffton Historic District); and, Article 9 – Definitions and Interpretations, Sec. 9.2 (Defined Terms) – First Reading – Kevin Icard, Director of Growth Management

A motion made by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood, Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve certain amendments to the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances with the following amendment(s) followed by a Public Hearing and Final Reading on April 9, 2024. Wood directed staff to discuss the UDO edits between 1st and 2nd readings. The following

- Sec. 5.15.8.I. (Medium House Type): A revision of the characteristic “Larger than a cottage and smaller than a Village House” to “Larger than a cottage.” Town Council unanimously approved the motion.

XIII. CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

Motion made by Councilmember Frazier, Seconded by Councilmember Hamilton to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. Town Council unanimously approved the motion.

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

XIV. EXECUTIVE SESSION

1. Legal Advice Pertaining to Personnel Matters (Pursuant to SC Freedom of Information Act 30-4-70 [a][2])

Executive Session was removed from the agenda.

XV. ACTION FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION

XVI. ADJOURNMENT

Motion made by Councilmember Hamilton, Seconded by Mayor Pro-Tempore Wood to adjourn the meeting at 7:41PM. Town Council unanimously approved.

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