

# TOWN COUNCIL

## STAFF REPORT



<b>MEETING DATE:</b>	September 9, 2025
<b>PROJECT:</b>	Proposed Amendments to the Town of Bluffton Code of Ordinances to Include Regulations Addressing Abandoned and Derelict Boats in the Town's Waterways
<b>PROJECT MANAGER:</b>	Heather Colin, AICP, Assistant Town Manager

**REQUEST:** Request Town Council's approval of first reading of an Ordinance amending the Town's Code of Ordinances addressing abandoned, derelict, and sunken boats (vessels) in the Town's waterways.

**BACKGROUND:** On October 8, 2024 Town Council workshopped a draft proposed Ordinance. The consensus at the time was to bring back an Ordinance for first reading in conjunction with Beaufort County's consideration. Beaufort County will consider the Ordinance at the Public Facilities Committee meeting scheduled for September 15.

The Governor signed a revised State law concerning this topic on May 8, 2025. The law requires any local jurisdiction who so chooses to adopt a similar regulation to adopt the same exact Ordinance as the state with no other changes or revisions.

Abandoned boats pose a threat for the fish, shellfish and shorebirds that live in the marsh and waterways as well as the water quality.

**SUMMARY:** The law was passed to improve the State's ability to identify and remove abandoned, derelict and sunken boats. South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) is working in cooperation with local jurisdictions to assist with the identification, education and enforcement of the law. The law and associated enforcement procedures are aimed at a state wide and regional concerted effort to address the issue.

The law creates a specific process for SCDNR and local authorities (if the Ordinance is adopted by the local authority) to remove boats left in the waterways and establishes a penalty for those convicted including fines and possible imprisonment.

### **CONSIDERATIONS:**

- Approve First Reading of the Proposed Ordinance
- Deny First Reading of the Proposed Ordinance
- Table First Reading of the Proposed Ordinance

**NEXT STEPS:** If Town Council approves first reading of this Ordinance, the following actions will occur:

- Second and Final Reading – October 14, 2025
- Staff will meet with South Carolina Department of Natural Resources (SCDNR) and Beaufort County to establish the associated procedures.

**ATTACHMENTS:**

1. Proposed Ordinance
2. Proposed Motion