

Walterboro City Council

Regular Meeting

City Hall

February 4, 2025

Minutes

A Regular Meeting of Walterboro City Council was held at City Hall on Tuesday, February 4, 2025, at 6:15 P.M., with Mayor Bill Young presiding.

Present: Joined in the meeting were: Mayor Bill Young, Councilmembers: Carl Brown, Judy Bridge, Paul Siegel, James Broderick, and Ladson Fishburne. City Manager Jeff Molinari, Assistant City Manager Ryan McLeod, City Attorney Brown McLeod, City Clerk Adrienne Nettles, Tourism Director Patricia Utsey, Michelle knight with Lowcountry Council of Governments, Barrett Ulm, and members of the community. Councilmember Greg Pryor was not in attendance.

Call to Order:

With the above-mentioned Councilmembers present, Mayor Young called the meeting to order and invited everyone to join in as he gave the invocation. Councilmember Bridge led the Pledge of Allegiance to our flag.

Mr. Young stated before we get into the agenda we have had a lot of community activity since the last meeting. A week ago, Monday, City Council had a special called meeting, and we came up with a 12-Point Plan to help address the violence that we are experiencing. Some of us met with leaders of the NAACP and we had a good meeting at St. Jude's the other night with a lot of you. A lot of ideas were discussed in that meeting. On Sunday we had a prayer vigil at the Civic Center. A lot of people in the community are pulling together to address the ongoing crime. There will also be another meeting Wednesday at the Library. City Council understands the urgency of addressing these problems and we are not going to surrender to gang violence. The following is what the 12-Point Plan will address the following:

1. Increase police presence, visibility, and enforcement targeting those areas with repeated gun violence or gang activity.
2. Increase community engagement by working with neighbors in affected areas, establishing active crime watch neighborhoods, and encouraging the gathering and sharing of information, and the reporting of criminal activity to the police.
3. Work to recruit and retain highly effective law enforcement personnel through competitive compensation and benefits.
4. Enlist the aid, support, and cooperation of community leaders.
5. Aggressively monitor social media to identify possible flash points and events which may lead to gun violence.
6. Work with the Sheriff's office to establish a task force for use in drive-by shootings in the city and the county, and to anticipate retaliatory responses, identifying and arresting those responsible.
7. Invest in high-tech investigative equipment such as FLOCK cameras and seek out and apply for grants or donations to help fund these.
8. Identify underage children who are participating in gun violence as victims of parental neglect and take appropriate action.
9. Improve communication with the public concerning public safety issues.
10. Address derelict buildings through aggressive code enforcement.
11. Replace or install street lighting where needed.
12. Work with DJJ, the Solicitor, State Representatives, Senators and the Governor to support laws which give law enforcement the tools needed to deter gun violence and keep us safe and to change laws that restrict law enforcement in addressing violent crimes.

We will be reaching out to you all as we go forward and ask for your help. We look forward to working with you all as we go forward.

Public Input on Agenda Items:

Mr. Ulm stated a citizen said the minutes were not available online, but they are. I did not see anything there that was said at the January meeting.

Mayor Young stated I do not think those minutes have been published yet.

Mr. Ulm stated they have not

Mayor Young stated it takes a little time especially for that meeting, since there was a lot going on and a lot of people speaking.

Mr. Ulm asked is it a few meetings behind?

Mayor Young said we are going to approve the minutes from October.

City Manager Jeff Molinari stated, let me just clarify, the October meeting minutes are simply an error that we recognized, and we just need City Council to adopt the amended minutes. We are up to date on all the other minutes. The January minutes will take a little while just giving the amount of public comment.

Councilmember Bridge stated in January we did approve the December minutes.

City Manager Jeff Molinari stated that is correct.

Ms. Jamie Brown stated I have been reading some of the statutes and ordinances for the city. It talks about citizen committees, is that something Walterboro has? Is this something you would want to consider getting out input to help.

Mayor Young stated that it is something to consider, and we have committees for different departments of the city. That was asked the other night. You do not need City Council's permission to form a committee. We met with a lot of these people on Thursday night and got a lot of beneficial information. You all can contact any Council member at any time.

Ms. Jamie Brown stated while we do not need City Council's blessing to form a committee, if we had the blessing and we were working together that would allow for a lot more organization and a little more power to change things.

Public Hearing:

1. **Ordinance # 2025-01**, AN ORDINANCE APPROVING AN APPLICATION FOR PRELIMINARY CERTIFICATION FOR HISTORIC REHABILITATION; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO (Second and Final Reading).

City Manager Jeff Molinari stated Mr. Mayor and members of City Council, if I can direct your attention to the screen this is the property at 227 N. Memorial which is going to be rehabilitated. The ordinance before you pertains to the Bailey Bill. This is a special tax program enabled by the General Assembly that allows individuals who rehabilitate historical structures to receive a property tax break for up to 20 years.

A gentleman in the audience asked what kind of building is it that is being rehabilitated?

City Manager Jeff Molinari stated it is my understanding at one time it was a house and will be repurposed into an inn.

Mayor Young stated it was the old Ackerman building which is behind Hiott's Pharmacy.

Mark Rosenberg asked, does this only pertain to commercial buildings and is it retroactive?

City Manager Jeff Molinari stated that it is only commercial buildings, and it is not retroactive.

Mayor Young stated the Bailey Bill is designed to encourage people to renovate buildings in historic areas.

Mrs. Rosenberg asked how many times can the Bailey Bill be used?

City Manager Jeff Molinari stated there is no limit on how many times it can be used.

2. CDBG Needs Assessment Hearing-Michelle Knight, Lowcountry Council of Governments.

Michelle Knight with Lowcountry Council of Governments gave the annual CDBG Needs Assessment Presentation. Ms. Knight went through each funding opportunity and gave a detailed explanation.

Mr. Crowe asked, are all these projects City Council initiated?

Michelle Knight stated not necessarily. They can be communities that have needs that they have talked about during the public hearing and Council sees that as a priority too. The Council sets the priorities, and we work with staff to try to develop the project based on its priorities.

Mr. Crowe asked if we have a project that falls under one of these categories, do I need to mention it to Council?

Michelle Knight stated if you have a project in mind you need to mention it during the public hearing and all that information is considered, when staff looks at making a list for City Council to approve.

Mayor Young stated I know the other night there were questions about CDBG funding for a camera. If you want to bring a project up, you can now, or if you want to bring it up later you can.

Michelle Knight stated talking about the cameras, we installed some cameras with a neighborhood project that we did. Those have to go into low to moderate income neighborhoods.

Ms. Jamie Brown stated you talked about road infrastructure and public safety. I live on Wichman Street, and everyone knows how the traffic is coming in from Summerville. We get a lot of cars and trucks speeding into town. Can those types of funds be used for signage or stop lights?

Michelle Knight stated that it would be through DOT funding.

Councilmember Fishburn stated this year's estimate is \$19 million, what was last year's estimate?

Michelle Knight stated it was around \$19-\$21 million last year.

Councilmember Fishburne asked does it change much?

Michelle Knight stated it does not change much.

Mayor Young asked when do you need the priorities?

Michelle Knight stated at the next Council meeting.

Mayor Young stated if anyone has any ideas, please suggest to Council members or the City Manager so that we can talk about them and consider those ideas.

Ms. Jamie Brown asked Ms. Knight, is all this information online that you went over?

Michelle knight stated if you go to our website and go under the Community and Economic Development page all this information is listed.

Presentations:

1. Barrett Ulm – Neighborhood Concerns.

Mr. Ulm stated good evening, Mayor and City Council. A lot has changed since the last time I stood before you all. I would like to mention that we have wonderful and dedicated law enforcement officers here in the City of Walterboro. We appreciate them very much. Now, that I have personally learned there is a lot more issues and problems than we see at hand and the Police Department is doing the best they can. I will do all that I can to help with the resources that are needed to combat the crime. The meeting the Mayor was talking about the other night was very productive. Councilmember Siegel and Mayor Young were in attendance, and we really appreciate that, and it means a lot to the citizens. Mr. Ulm spoke about the Open Carry Law. This law allows anyone to openly carry a firearm without a permit. This law has basically handcuffed law enforcement. This is a big issue. During that meeting the other night the 12-Point Plan was implemented. I have all the confidence in our City Council to exactly what they say they are going to do. City Council is here to protect us and give law enforcement the resources needed to protect us. Since the last meeting we have been keeping a record of all the shootings. During the meeting at St. Jude's gun shots rang out and two people were shot. That just goes to show they have no regard for human life. I think one of the issues that we have here is that no one really knows who to go to in order to talk about all these issues. As a group we are not here to slam anyone, we want to help. The more information that we are giving as a group, the more we can help.

Mayor Young stated Barrett we are going to do everything in our power to take care of these problems.

Councilmember Broderick stated I'd like to make a motion that we establish a Public Safety Committee of Council to address community concerns and to address the 12-Point Plan.

Mayor Young asked you are saying to make a committee of Council not of community.

Councilmember Broderick stated yes, to take and pull information from the community.

Mayor Young stated we are the committee sitting up here that you have elected and appointed to handle this, and you can contact us at any time.

Councilmember Broderick stated I just feel that if we do that it will give the community the opportunity to see that we have a meeting that is on a smaller format. That committee can bring information back to Council. I think this will help to make the plan successful.

Councilmember Siegel stated I do understand the idea of accessibility. Some people live in these areas affected by the gun violence. They want to feel comfortable sharing information on a regular basis, and I am for it.

Mayor Young stated we will establish a committee through Council proceedings.

A motion to approve the Public Safety Liaison Committee was made by Councilmember Broderick, seconded by Councilmember Siegel, all in favor motion carries.

2. Patricia Utsey, Main Street Manager/Tourism Director-Main Street Walterboro 2024 Report.

Patricia Utsey gave a presentation on the 2024 Main Street Impact Report. Patricia went through each section and gave a detailed explanation of all the wonderful things taking place in the downtown area. She also stated we are looking forward to an exciting 2025 with new projects coming up. We are in a good position to do a lot of great things.

Approval of Minutes:

City Manager Jeff Molinari stated Mr. Mayor and members of City Council we just need to amend the October minutes, since we noticed an error in them. There were two paragraphs at the end that needed to be reversed. We ask for Council approval to adopt the amended minutes for the record.

Upon motion of Councilmember Brown, Seconded by Councilmember Bridge, the following minutes were unanimously approved.

1. Regular Meeting- October 1, 2024.

Old Business:

1. **Ordinance # 2025-01**, AN ORDINANCE APPROVING AN APPLICATION FOR PRELIMINARY CERTIFICATION FOR HISTORIC REHABILITATION; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO (Second and Final Reading).

Motion: Councilmember Broderick; Seconded by Councilmember Fishburne

Discussion: None

Carried: All ayes

New Business:

1. 2025 First Thursday Request.

Motion: Councilmember Bridge; Seconded by Councilmember Broderick

Discussion: None

Carries: All ayes

City Manager's Report:

City Manager Jeff Molinar stated I just want to announce that Walterboro City Council will conduct its 2025 City Council Planning Retreat Friday, February 21, 2025, at the Lowcountry Regional Airport, 537

Aviation Way, Walterboro, SC beginning at 9:00 AM. No formal action will be taken on any items at the retreat. Any action items will be brought back to a Regular City Council Meeting for Council's consideration.

Also, when we were talking about the Bailey Bill, it is the Historic Preservation that reviews the application, not the Planning Commission.

A motion was made to go into Executive Session by Councilmember Brown, seconded by Councilmember Bridge. Mayor Young explained that City Council would be going into Executive Session to discuss matters of Receipt of Legal Advice- Development of Security Personnel/Devices, Personnel Matter-Compensation, Potential Acquisition of Property, and Contractual Matters: Walterboro Welcome Center, and Building Inspections.

Executive Session:

1. Receipt of Legal Advice - Development of Security Personnel/Devices.
2. Personnel Matter - Compensation.
3. Potential Acquisition of Property.
4. Contractual Matters:
 - a. Walterboro Welcome Center.
 - b. Building Inspections.

A motion to come out of Executive Session was made by Councilmember Bridge, seconded by Councilmember Broderick, all in favor motion carries.

Open Session:

A motion to authorize the City Manager to implement salary increases/sign on/recruitment bonuses for sworn in personnel in the Police Department was made by Councilmember Broderick, seconded by Councilmember Bridge, all in favor motion carries. Mayor Young announced the appointment of Mayor Pro Tem Paul Siegel, Councilmember Judy Bridge and himself to the Public Safety Liaison Committee.

There being no further business to consider, a motion to adjourn was made by Councilmember Brown, seconded by Councilmember Bridge, and passed unanimously. Mayor Young adjourned the meeting at 8:44 P.M. Notice of the meeting was distributed with the agenda packets, to all local media, posted on City Hall bulletin board and posted on the City's website at least twenty-four hours prior to meeting time.

Respectfully,

Adrienne Nettles
City Clerk