

MINUTES
TUESDAY, JANUARY 4, 2022
VIRTUAL REGULAR MEETING
6:00 P.M.

Colleton County Council
Council Chambers, Old Jail Building
109 Benson Street
Walterboro, SC 29488

Present: Chairman Steven Murdaugh called the meeting to order with Council Members Dr. Joseph Flowers, Art Williams, Gene Whetsell and Phillip Taylor in attendance.

Others Included: Kevin Griffin, Sean Thornton, Meagan Utsey, Jon Carpenter, Kaela Brinson, and Barry McRoy.

Phillip Taylor gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Minutes

- A. **Regular Meeting Minutes, December 7, 2021** — Dr. Joseph Flowers moved to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on December 7, 2021. The motion was seconded by Councilman Phillip Taylor and the motion carried unanimously.

Administrator's Briefing

Mr. Griffin: Stated that January 12th will be our formation meeting for the Accommodations Tax Advisory Board. I appreciate all of you getting nominees; we now have a quorum and can get them moving forward to spend the initial Accommodations Tax. I believe we are at about \$75,000 that can be used towards increasing tourism in the community. On Wednesday, January 19th at 5:30 p.m. we will have the Capital Sales Tax Program ranking meeting for the new sales tax ballot that will come up November of this year. I had hoped to have the information out by now, but our contractors have been a little behind. There has been some additional things added at the end, as well as, we are just getting some jail numbers this week. The information will be out no later than the close of business on Friday. This will give you two good weekends and a week to review. If you have any questions at all please give me a call as I know this will generate a lot of conversation. We can get together one on one and try to hammer out any details that we need to before we get into the meeting, so that everyone understands what is in these proposals.

The only other item I want to discuss with you is we were really busy here in December, especially in the finance department, finishing our year-end audit. The audit wrapped up the fiscal year 2021 with a much improved fiscal year as 2020. The total revenues were up about 4.1 million, with a total of 57.4 million overall. This led to a total increase in fund balance across all funds, not just the general funds, to include: Fire-Rescue, Solid Waste, and Roads and Bridges of about 3 million dollars. The general fund accounted for about 33.5 million of total revenue and had 32.1 million in expenditures with about \$967,000 increase in fund balance there. The increase offsets \$538,000 used in fund balance reporting in fiscal year 2020. Which brought us under the 9 million that we

have been accustomed to, but we are now back over that to a 9.1 million dollar fund balance, which represents 29% of annual expenditures. As you know by our Budget Ordinance and Gatsby requirements, we are required to be within at least 20% of annual expenditures to stay in good standing with our bond readings and such. Also, any county that receives over \$750,000 in federal grant awards must undergo a single audit, which reviews our internal controls and compliance with the various federal regulations. For fiscal year 2021, we received 7.6 million in federal funds either directly or that passed through from various state agencies. That single audit was also completed, the county did not have any findings which will allow us to be a low risk auditee. The audit report in full will be presented to council in February. If anyone would like details on any of this information, let me know.

Chairman Murdaugh: This is for fiscal year 2021, do you know if that includes the first six months of 2022?

Mr. Griffin: It does include the first six months of 2022, and that will be in your council report that we get out later in the week. We will have some good information on that, we are just getting December numbers in and we have that included in the council report that is coming out later in the week.

Chairman Murdaugh: The meeting on January 19th, is that a virtual meeting?

Mr. Griffin: We were going to discuss that, but I know we have had a pretty strong uptick in the county and within the local government of Covid cases. That meeting may end up virtual as well, but we will discuss that in the next few weeks.

No further discussion.

Chairman Murdaugh: Before we move on we have an Emergency Resolution, 22-R-06. I move that we amend the agenda to add the emergency Resolution No. 22-R-06, to Authorize the Waiver of Solid Waste Residential Debris Disposal Fees. This motion was seconded by Councilman Taylor. The motion carried unanimously. This item will be added as line item F under New Business.

Old Business

A. 3rd Reading Ordinance 21-O-16, To Reapportion Colleton County Council East and West Districts to Meet Federal and State Requirements Based on United States Census 2020 Population Data

Councilman Taylor moved to approve the 3rd reading of Ordinance 21-O-16, To Reapportion Colleton County Council East and West Districts to Meet Federal and State Requirements Based on United States Census 2020 Population Data. The motion was seconded by Dr. Flowers. The motion was carried unanimously.

Chairman Murdaugh: Do we have any dates and locations for public hearing?

Councilman Williams: I thought we advised the County Administrator to contact Colleton County School District. I am aware they have been out of school for a while, so I don't know if he had the opportunity.

Chairman Murdaugh: They do not have any interest to participate with us, so we will be doing this on our own.

Mr. Griffin: I have reached out to the school district and provided them with the information from the SC Revenue and Fiscal Affairs office. I have been waiting to hear back. We can certainly move forward on our own if council would like to do that.

Chairman Murdaugh: I received an email from the chairman of the school board basically stating that they were going to have to do their own meeting. I will verify with the chairman again, but we need to go ahead and try to set some dates and move forward.

Mr. Griffin: There again, we will have to have some conversation related to Covid rules on this as well since we stated we wanted to do this out in the community. We probably need to discuss how we want to handle this.

No further discussion.

B. 3rd Reading Ordinance 21-O-17, to Amend Title 6 – Animals, Section 6.04.10 - Definitions and Section 6.04.40 – Restraint, of the Colleton County Code of Ordinances

Councilman Whetsell: I would like to make a motion that we table this particular ordinance, 21-O-17, and try to have some public hearings on this. I am not exaggerating I have had probably 20 calls from dog hunters on this. I think they need some time to be heard, as well as, county council and DNR.

Chairman Murdaugh: I will certainly agree with you that I have had numerous calls and there are some public comments tonight. I have no opposition to tabling it. I do think we need to have some public forum that we can present information to them. I believe there is a lot of misinformation out there. I guess the issue is Covid and where and how we are going to do it.

Dr. Flowers: I will second the motion to table this and I agree to getting everyone information rather than disinformation.

Councilman Whetsell moved to table Ordinance 21-O-17, to Amend Title 6 – Animals, Section 6.04.10 - Definitions and Section 6.04.40 – Restraint, of the Colleton County Code of Ordinances. The motion was seconded by Dr. Flowers. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Murdaugh: We will try to come up with a location, but we are kind of at the mercy of Covid.

No further discussion.

New Business

A. Resolution 22-R-01, To Declare February as Black History Month in Colleton County

Councilman Taylor moved to approve Resolution 22-R-01, To Declare February as Black History Month in Colleton County. This motion was seconded by Councilman Williams. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Resolution 22-R-02, To Authorize Acceptance and Budgeting of Various Grants for FY 2021-2022

Councilman Taylor moved to approve Resolution 22-R-02, To Authorize Acceptance and Budgeting of Various Grants for FY 2021-2022. The motion was seconded by Councilman Williams. The motion carried unanimously.

C. Resolution 22-R-03, To Approve Acceptance of a Grant from Coastal Electric Cooperative, Inc. in the amount of \$144,125 for Industrial Infrastructure Development

Councilman Taylor moved to approve Resolution 22-R-03, To Approve Acceptance of a Grant from Coastal Electric Cooperative, Inc. in the amount of \$144,125 for Industrial Infrastructure Development. The motion was seconded by Councilman Williams. The motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Murdaugh: I just want to say we are fortunate to have good cooperatives in the county and thank you.

Councilman Whetsell: Yes, thank you.

No further discussion.

D. Resolution 22-R-04, To Authorize the Council Clerk to Advertise for Board Vacancies

Dr. Flowers moved to approve Resolution 22-R-04, To Authorize the Council Clerk to Advertise for Board Vacancies. The motion was seconded by Councilman Whetsell. The motion carried unanimously.

E. Resolution 22-R-05, To Appoint Members to Board Vacancies

Councilman Williams moved to approve Resolution 22-R-05, to Appoint Members to Board Vacancies. The motion was seconded by Councilman Whetsell. The motion carried unanimously.

The following appointments were made by acclimation: Gerald Breland, LaVern Polk, and Mark Farish—Colleton County Fire and Rescue Commission; Samuel Bethay—Colleton County Land Use Zoning Board of Appeals.

F. **Resolution No. 22-R-06, to Authorize the Waiver of Solid Waste Residential Debris Disposal Fees.**

Councilman Taylor moved to approve Resolution 22-R-06, to Authorize the Waiver of Solid Waste Residential Debris Disposal Fees. This motion was seconded by Councilman Williams. The motion carried unanimously.

Public Comments

The following public comments were submitted prior to the meeting via www.colletoncounty.org/comment.

Chairman Murdaugh read the following aloud:

Jody Carter: Gentlemen, I am asking you as a US Military Veteran, Farmer and a proud Native of Colleton County to not remove any of the language in the below ordinance:

6.04.010. - Definitions.

Running at large. Any animal shall be deemed to be "running at large" when the animal is off the property of the owner and not under the immediate and direct supervision of the owner or under the physical control of the owner or keeper by means of a leash or similar restraining device. In the case of hunting dogs actively involved in an ongoing hunt, the dogs shall not be deemed to be running at large so long as they are on the property legally and/or the owner or keeper is actively seeking to retrieve the dog.

If the wording was removed as requested, it would be an end to all dog hunting in our county, no questions asked. It would open the door to allow SCDNR the rights to charge anyone whose dog crosses a property line onto lands the animal is not welcome. This could be a bird dog retrieving across a hedgerow, a rabbit dog making his circle, a deer dog/coon dog/hog dog performing an act that he was bred and created to do, or just simply your household pet. I understand we have bad apples in every group but 99% of dog hunters are not hunting with the purpose of harassing or aggravating another hunter. They are simply in love with the sport and the dog. I ask you to keep our Houndsmen and Birddog Handlers protected and to not let the outside influence of seasonal hunting transplants and neighboring counties impact Colleton traditions.

Coming from an agricultural background, I have seen that allowing hunters to pursue deer and hogs with dogs is a major help in controlling our overpopulated deer/hog herd. I invite anyone that thinks we have a decreasing deer population, to look at federal crop insurance data and add up the millions of crop dollars lost annually in our state to deer and hog damage. Nor are we lacking in automobile collisions with deer in our county based on a simple drive down our highways each morning.

Obviously, if any dog that is on land which he is not welcome AND it is harassing livestock, personal property, or endangering safety, then we have a problem that needs to be resolved.

Lastly, I thank each of you for your service to our county and I hope each of you give this much thought and consideration.

God Bless.

Kevin Brady: I'm against this running at large amendment. This is nothing but a money making scheme for the county!! We elected y'all to have a voice for us!! We will not tolerate y'all not working for us and will get voted out if this passes!!

Mickey Joe Pye: I am concerned about the dog at large law that is being pushed thru by our county council. I am an avid hunter in Colleton County with hounds for deer and hogs. This law is will effect a lot of people in the county that pays a lot of lease payments on properties that they have to hunt. I am asking all council members to rethink this law this is our heritage and right to hunt with hounds. Trust me I know someone is probably having a problem with one or two individuals that are probably breaking the law and giving dog hunters a bad name but please don't take it out on the rest of us law abiding citizens. We as dog men spend a lot of money in tracking equipment but it's not all 100 percent perfect and dogs do get on places that we as hunters don't want them there. You have some people that don't even have enough land to be turning dogs loose on to begin with that's the ones who need to be punished. If you have one bad apple in the bunch throw that apple away not the whole basket. If this law needs to be put in effect let the voters VOTE on this issue. That is our right! Thank you and I would like to hear from my councilman on this issue. 843-908-3393 cell or email mickeyjoe.pye@prtc.us

Halasa Glover: Concern about this new law because I'm a dog hunter

Justin Miller: We are sitting in front of the old jail building. We would like to have this dog ordinance knocked off the table immediately!!! We are here to vote this down today.

Colleton County Coalition of Rural Neighbors: What is the process that should be taken in order to invite our Councilmen to a virtual town hall? Our organization advocates for the "rural" areas of Colleton County.

Councilman Williams: I have received numerous calls from different hunters in support of leaving the ordinance as is rather than striking the last part.

Councilman Taylor: I to have received numerous calls and have been approached in a number of places in town as well as receiving emails from concerned hunters.

Dr. Flowers: I think we need to look at this thing and table it like you said. We need to look at it and see what the problem really is and how we can work this for the County as well as being compliant with the state law too. I think that is one of the issues brought up by DNR. I think we need to get everyone together and get some factual information out there and why this was actually brought to us. I think that would clarify a lot of things that people are clouded about right now.

Chairman Murdaugh: We have tabled it for tonight and have decided to have public forum. I will put together some sort of presentation that shows the state statue and the county ordinance. I think

it is important to not only look at those but also the proposed bill that came from the legislature in 2018 that never got out of committee. We need to look at what potentially could happen. I have also received numerous comments and met with people here at my office. There is a lot of misinformation out there as well. This is certainly not intended to be a money making...the county is probably not getting as it pertains to hunting dogs. Let's be clear this Ordinance is already in place as far as relating to pets and other animals, this doesn't change any of that. The issue is the wording as it relates to hunting dogs. I think that is what we need to put out there; the issue with state law and county ordinance. Hopefully if we do that we can come up with a resolution that will be fair to everybody.

Councilman Taylor: I wanted to wish everyone in the county a Happy New Year. Also, I just found out today that Mr. Paden McLeod passed away and his funeral is today. I wasn't sure if the rest of council was aware of that, certainly we send our thoughts to his family and business.

Dr. Flowers: I have known him for a long time, we send condolences to his friends and family.

Councilman Williams: My condolences to the family as I did not know of his passing.

Councilman Whetsell: Expresses his condolences as well.

Councilman Williams: What can be done about the sale of ammunition via road side in the unincorporated areas of Colleton County? We have people that set up in a truck, pull on the side of the road and start selling ammunition.

Chairman Murdaugh: Is this in the city or rural area?

Councilman Williams: This is out in the rural areas.

Chairman Murdaugh: I am not sure that there is anything...it would seem there would be some regulation on sale of ammunition, but I don't know without researching that. This is something we can certainly check on. Is this a situation where there is price gouging?

Councilman Williams: No, I just think that ammunition in times like this when you can't get it out of gun shops but you can buy it black market off of the streets with the crimes we have in Colleton County I don't think we are doing ourselves any favors by allowing black market trucks to set up in our community.

Chairman Murdaugh: I will get with the administrator and county attorney and see what, if any, violation...are they selling any other items?

Councilman Williams: No, all I see is signs leading up to the trucks that say ammunition for sale.

Councilman Whetsell: *Comments on the price of the ammunition for sale on the side of the roads.

Councilman Williams: But you can't get it in the store and you have one individual with that much ammunition is an incident waiting to happen.

Chairman Murdaugh: Council, are there any other comments.

Councilman Williams: Mr. Chairman, I have an email that I received addressed to the council from Ms. Gail Kidd. Did anyone else receive this email?

All present did not receive the email.

Councilman Williams: ***Reads the email aloud for all of council. The email requests that the Cottageville Park on Pierce Road be named after Mr. Womble.

Chairman Murdaugh: Clarifies the location of the park.

Councilman Taylor: Stated that it is the park in Cottageville off of Pierce Road.

Chairman Murdaugh: Are we currently working out there?

Councilman Taylor: Yes, we have started some of the work on the property.

Chairman Murdaugh: I certainly think we can put it on the Agenda for next month if everyone is in agreeance.

Councilman Taylor: I agree as long as we are not overstepping the recreation center, because they normally do those things. We just need to include them.

Chairman Murdaugh: We can coordinate that with the director of the recreation park and see if they have a recommendation.

Councilman Williams: I appreciate you considering putting it on the agenda.

Chairman Murdaugh: I have been notified by Meagan that we have more public comments.

Meagan Utsey read the following aloud:

Sherri Cassidy: There are a lot of people at the old jail building to vote against this ordinance with roaming at large. It should be left as is!!

Halasa Glover: Concerned about dog hunting law.

Rural Coalition Of Colleton County: Our concerns are not the clubs (though they appear to be problematic) we want to talk about A Farmers Market in the Green Pond Area/Hwy 17. The people need access to fresh fruits and vegetables. The people should not have to drive 8 miles to have access to fresh food. Also, noone answered my question as to how the Rural areas can no longer be the "forgotten". We are the back bone of this County. We want to work with you not against you. Thank you ALL.

Chairman Murdaugh: Let's see if we can get some contact information on the individual who heads up the Coalition. Are there any more public comments?

Meagan Utsey: No, that is all.

Adjournment

Councilman Williams moved to adjourn the meeting, Councilman Whetsell seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

The public/media was informed of the location, date, and time of the meeting on Friday, December 31st, 2021 in accordance with the provisions of the Freedom of Information Act.

This ___ day of February, 2022.



Steven D. Murdaugh, Chairman

ATTEST:



Kaela Brinson, Clerk to Council

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