

CITY OF BARNWELL, SOUTH CAROLINA

**MINUTES of the MEETING of BARNWELL CITY COUNCIL
October 3, 2022 – 5:30PM**

**MEETING LOCATION:
130 Main Street, Barnwell, SC 29812**

Barnwell City Council met in Regular Session with Mayor Rivera presiding.

Councilmembers Present: Mayor Rivera and Councilmembers Brad All, Ryan Bragg, Alicia Davis, James Moody, and Ron Still

Councilmembers Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Kinlaw

Others Present: City Administrator Lynn McEwen, City Clerk & Treasurer Kim Vargo, City Attorney Thomas Boulware, Police Chief Lamaz Robinson, and Fire Chief Tony Dicks

Ms. Alexander Whitbeck of the People Sentinel was also present.

CALL TO ORDER & PRAYER

Mayor Rivera called the meeting to order. Councilmember Still led in prayer.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council led the pledge of allegiance.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Councilmember Still made a motion to approve the agenda. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Moody and unanimously approved.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Mr. Tony Carson introduced himself to Council. He has recently moved to Barnwell and wanted to offer his assistance to the community.

Ms. Toni Hutchins expressed concerns about speeding on Main St in front of her ice cream parlor

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RESOLUTION 2022-07 IN MEMORY OF AARON ODOM

Mayor Rivera read the resolution in memory of Aaron Odom recognizing his dedicated public service to the citizens of the City of Barnwell. Mr. Odom was a retired police officer. Councilmember Moody made a motion to approve the resolution. The motion was seconded by Councilman All and unanimously approved. The resolution was presented to the Odom family.

APPROVAL OF THE MINUTES OF THE SEPTEMBER 12, 2022, REGULAR SCHEDULED CITY COUNCIL MEETING

Councilmember All made a motion to approve the minutes of the September 12, 2022, regular scheduled City Council meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Davis and unanimously approved.

PRESENTATION FROM SOUTHEASTERN HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Ms. Beth Overton, Deputy Director of the Southeastern Housing & Community Development Corporation, explained the Blight Elimination Program. The program would be a cooperative effort with the City to provide reimbursable grants to property owners who would be willing to demolish rundown and unlivable houses in the City. The maximum grant amount would be \$6,000. Ms. Overton went over the program requirements. She was requesting \$100,000 for the program and \$10,000 for administration of the program.

BLIGHT PROGRAM-APPROVAL TO USE ARPA FUNDING AND APPROVAL OF THE CONTRACT WITH SOUTHEASTERN HOUSING DEVELOPMENT CORPORATION

Council discussed the program, contract, and use of ARPA funds. Mayor Rivera expressed concerns that the program might be an incentive for owners not to do anything with their properties so the City will pay. He thought property owners should reimburse the City if they received a grant and then sold their property. He would like to see ordinances strengthened. He also expressed concern about using ARPA funds.

Councilmember Still made a motion to approve the use of ARPA funds, not to exceed \$110,000, for the program. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Moody. The motion passed 5 to 1 with Mayor Rivera voting against the motion.

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Councilmember Still made a motion to approve the contract with Southeastern Housing & Community Development Corporation for administration of the program. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Moody. The motion passed 5 to 1 with Mayor Rivera voting against the motion.

APPROVAL ARPA FUNDING FOR THE FIRE STATION

City Administrator McEwen recommended that the City use the remaining uncommitted ARPA funding, approximately \$1,200,000, to fund the initial stages of the fire station. This would be in addition to the \$350,000 already received from the state. Councilmembers All and Moody expressed concerns about outdated equipment in the police department. Mayor Rivera said the priority should be the fire department. Discussion followed. Councilmember Still made a motion to commit the \$1,200,000 plus the \$350,000 for the fire station. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Moody and unanimously approved.

DISCUSSION OF THE STATE INSURANCE BENEFITS PROGRAM

City Clerk & Treasurer Kim Vargo provided Council with financial information comparing the City's current health plan with BCBS to the State health plan administered by PEBA. The total monthly premiums would be lower with the State plan but changes in benefits and administration should also be considered. Discussion followed. The matter was referred to the finance and salary committee to make their recommendation at the next Council meeting.

FESTIVAL DISCUSSION

Mayor Rivera thought that the City should have a fall festival. He did not realize that it had been cancelled this year. The Barnwell Development Association partners with the City to help put on some of these activities. Some had just helped with the Fall Farmers Market and Vendor Fair at Fuller Park. They are also helping with the City's Christmas festivities on the Circle in early December. There are a lot of fall activities currently planned by churches. Representatives from the BDA expressed their concern about the lack of volunteers. It is always the same people helping out and they get burned out. Mayor Rivera asked that in the future they reach out to Council for any help they may need. Council can help with volunteers from churches and other groups.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Water and Sewer (Councilmember Brad All & Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Kinlaw) – No Report

Sanitation and Streets (Mayor Pro Tem Kinlaw & Councilmember Ron Still) – No Report

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Parks, Recreation and Tourism (Councilmember Alicia Davis & Jimbo Moody) – Council member Moody read a written report form Director Kevin Roberts about fall activities.

Police (Councilmember Jimbo Moody & Brad All) – Councilmember Moody said that he and Councilmember All rode with the police. The officers are running radar to help with speeding. Councilmember Still said he was concerned about break-ins in the Meadowbrook area. Mayor Rivera said that it is impossible for officers to be everywhere they are needed at one time. The new cameras will help identify problem areas.

Fire (Councilmember Ryan Bragg & Ron Still and Mayor Rivera) – No Report

Finance and Salary (Councilmembers Ryan Bragg and Alicia Davis) – Administrator McEwen said there was a request to have a credit card issued to Police Chief Robinson for travel expenditures and online purchases. Chief Robinson had to use his own credit card for training. Currently the only approved credit cards are for the City Administrator, Clerk & Treasurer, and recreation department. This will be addressed at next month's meeting.

Building and Planning (Councilmember Ron Still & Ryan Bragg) – Administrator McEwen said that Spratlins & Sons is currently working on a report for the fire station and a meeting will be scheduled in the near future.

ADMINISTRATOR'S UPDATE

- We are still waiting on the cameras and wi-fi for Lemon Park, Fuller Park, and city hall.
- The website is being transitioned over behind the scenes. It should be finished up in November.
- City meetings for October include:
 - Wednesday, October 5th, 3pm to 7pm - Public information open house at the Barnwell County Library on the SCDNR/FEMA Floodplain Management and Flood Zones of the Salkehatchie Watershed
 - Tuesday, October 11th, 11am – Planned hearing with the City of Barnwell building inspector with SAFEbuilt for 115 Derry Lane
 - Thursday, October 20th – MASC Regional Advocacy meeting at LSCOG

EXECUTIVE SESSION: DISCUSSION OF CONTRACT WITH CITY ATORNEY

Councilmember Bragg made a motion to go into executive session. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Davis and unanimously approved.

Council returned to open session.

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ADJOURN

Councilmember Still made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilmember All and unanimously approved.

Submitted by:



Kim Marie Vargo, Clerk & Treasurer

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