CITY OF BARNWELL, SOUTH CAROLINA

MINUTES of the MEETING of BARNWELL CITY COUNCIL
September 8, 2026, 5:30

MEETING LOCATION:
130 Main Street, Barnwell, SC 29812

Barnwell City Council met in **Special Called Meeting** with Mayor Still presiding.

Councilmembers Present:	Mayor Ron Still, Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Kinlaw, Councilmembers Louis Claytor, and Richard Dixon
Councilmember Absent:	Councilmembers Wanda Highsmith, Alicia Davis, and Jana Myers
Others Present:	Administrator David Holcomb, City Attorney Thomas Boulware, Clerk Kim M. Vargo, Phillip Delk, Bryan Black/ GHD Engineering and Chief Butts

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Still called the meeting to order.

FUNDING, IN EXCESS OF GRANT FUNDS OF LIFT STATION EMERGENCY BYPASS PUMPS

Brian Black of GHD noted that the bid documents were specifically structured to allow individual pump stations to be removed from the project scope, anticipating a potential shortfall. He strongly emphasized, however, that the current pricing represented the best value the City would likely ever achieve for these pumps, given that they were bundled into a single bid. He cited that pump costs had risen approximately 25 percent over the preceding 14 months based on direct conversations with the equipment supplier, and cautioned that

deferring individual stations to a later, standalone purchase could result in substantially higher costs. He estimated prices could increase by 20 percent or more if stations were procured separately in the future.

Councilmember Claytor inquired whether bypass pumps from one station could be deployed to serve another in the event of a failure. The Water Department Director and Brian Black clarified that the pump stations are not interconnected—each serves a distinct gravity-fed sewer basin—and therefore a failure at any one station would result in that service area being unable to convey wastewater. In such a scenario, the City would need to deploy pump trucks continuously until the issue was resolved. The Water Department Director reinforced that the Elementary School pump station was of particular concern given its service to critical facilities including Barnwell Pediatrics and the dialysis center and indicated that if a station were to be deferred, Reynolds Road would be the lowest-priority candidate.

City Clerk & Treasurer Kim Vargo then presented the proposed funding mechanism. She explained that the City has budgeted an annual transfer of $265,000 from the water and sewer fund to the general fund as reimbursement for shared costs and return on investment. This transfer, which had not been possible in prior years due to limited water and sewer revenues, is now feasible given improved financial conditions following the implementation of the new rate structure. With the current fiscal year ending September 30, 2026, and the same transfer anticipated in fiscal year 2027, a combined $530,000 would be available. She further noted that, given the approximately 18-month project timeline and the lead time of nearly one year for pump procurement, the City would have additional time to manage cash flow. She characterized the general fund as currently being in a sound position, and indicated that, if necessary, funds transferred to the general fund could be returned to the water and sewer fund to cover the project obligation.

The Mayor summarized the collective recommendation from staff and the engineer: acting now, under a single bid package, offered the City the most cost-effective opportunity to secure emergency bypass capability at all four stations. He acknowledged the significance of the $516,370 commitment but expressed confidence, based on the financial information provided by Ms. Vargo, that the expenditure could be made without placing the City in a vulnerable financial position.

Councilmember Dixon made a motion to approve funding the required amount of $516,370, in excess of grant funds, to provide emergency bypass pump stations at the Elementary School and Reynolds Road pump stations, to be funded through the water and sewer transfer mechanism over the next two fiscal years. The motion was seconded by Claytor and unanimously approved.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Councilmember Dixon made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Kinlaw and unanimously approved.

Submitted by:

Allison S. Wade, Asst. Clerk