

CITY OF BARNWELL, SOUTH CAROLINA

**MINUTES of the MEETING of BARNWELL CITY COUNCIL
September 14, 2026, 5:30**

MEETING LOCATION:
130 Main Street, Barnwell, SC 29812

Barnwell City Council met in a Regular Called Meeting with Mayor Still presiding.

Council Members Present: Mayor Ron Still, Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Kinlaw,
Councilmembers Louis Claytor, Alicia Davis, Wanda
Highsmith, Ricky Dixon, and Jana Myers

Council Members Absent: NONE

Others Present: City Administrator David Holcomb City Attorney
Thomas Boulware, Clerk Allison Wade, and Police
Chief Michael Butts,

The press was notified but no one was present.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Still called the meeting to order. Prayer was led by Councilmember Alicia Davis.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE & CIVILITY PLEDGE

Council led the Pledge of Allegiance and the Civility Pledge.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

-James Shacht addressed the Council regarding his appointment to the Savannah River Site (SRS) Citizens Advisory Board (CAB), which he joined in May 2026. He announced a community initiative related to a data center and power generating plant at SRS, noting that while it falls slightly outside the CAB's formal scope, it has significant overlap. Mr. Shacht informed the public of a Facebook page he established to share information and collect community input. He announced a public community workshop on Thursday, September 24, at the Barnwell County Library, and reminded attendees of the full CAB board meeting on Tuesday, September 22, in Aiken, also available via YouTube livestream. He distributed QR code brochures and community discussion guides.

- Bobby Smith, 33 Hickory Street presented a complaint regarding unpermitted fill material he alleged was illegally hauled into a vacant adjacent lot at 73 Hickory Street. Mr. Smith outlined a detailed chronology of events beginning in February, describing his repeated attempts to alert city officials to potential floodplain violations on that property. He stated that City Administrator David Holcomb acknowledged during a June 17 walkthrough that illegal fill had been added to the lot and that the city had failed to catch it yet indicated it was too late to act and intended to issue a certificate of occupancy. Mr. Smith reported that after he filed a complaint with the state—which he said resulted in the project being placed on hold—he experienced what he characterized as retaliatory actions by city staff, including visits from a fire marshal and a building safety official regarding a fire and a rooster, respectively. He stated that staff members confirmed to him these visits were directed by Administrator Holcomb. Mr. Smith expressed significant dissatisfaction with the city's handling of his legitimate property concern and the subsequent treatment of him and his family.

RECOGNITION OF DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH BY CUMBEE CENTER

Willie Walker asked whether the city had funds to remove more dilapidated houses on Second Street. His family member owns some property that he wishes to have torn down. Mr. Walker was instructed to send the addresses/information to Administrator Holcomb.

Scott Neeley/ Dominion was recognized for his contribution to the mural project and his ongoing community partnership.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES OF AUGUST 3, 2026, REGULAR CITY COUNCIL

Councilmember Claytor made a motion to approve the minutes of August 3, 2026, Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro. During Discussion Councilmember Myers requested any documents to be included in the council packets. Administrator Holcomb explained that the draft minutes were not completed and ready for review until the morning of the meeting. Councilmember Myers made a motion to table the approval of the minutes of August 3, 2026, Regular Scheduled City Council Meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Davis. A vote was taken and Councilperson Dixon, Myers, Kinlaw, Davis and Mayor Still, voted in affirmative. The motion was approved 5-1. It was opposed by Councilmember Claytor.

FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE 2026-7, "AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CONVEYANCE OF AN EASEMENT FOR UTILITY PURPOSE TO DOMINION ENERGY SC AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO".

Councilmember Myers made a motion to read the ordinance by title only. The motion was seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Peggy Kinlaw and unanimously approved. Administrator Holcomb read the ordinance by title only. Councilmember Claytor made a motion to approve the first reading of the ordinance. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Dixon and unanimously approved.

APPROVAL OF THE RECOMMENDATION OF CITY'S ENGINEER, GHD TO ACCEPT THE BID OF J.L. CONSTRUCTION CO., INC.

Councilmember Highsmith made a motion to approve the recommendation of the City's Engineer, GHD, to accept the bid of J.L. Construction Co., Inc. in the amount of \$1,223,200.00, and to authorize the City Administrator to execute notice to proceed with Contract Agreements between the City of Barnwell and J.L. Construction Co., Inc. for the completion of the Emergency Bypass Pumps for Pump Stations. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Claytor. A vote was taken and Councilperson Dixon, Claytor, Kinlaw, Davis and Mayor Still, voted in affirmative. The motion was approved 5-1. It was opposed by Councilmember Myers.

APPROVAL OF THE RECOMMENDATION OF CITY'S ENGINEER, GHD TO ACCEPT THE BID OF WEST ELECTRIC CONTRACTORS OF NEWBERRY, INC.

Councilmember Claytor made a Motion to approve the recommendation of the City's Engineer, GHD, to accept the bid of West Electric Contractors of Newberry, Inc. in the amount of \$955,953.00, and to authorize the City Administrator to execute notice to proceed with Contract Agreements between the City of Barnwell and West Electric Contractors of Newberry, Inc. for the completion of the Generators for Well Sites. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Dixon. A vote was taken and Councilperson Dixon, Claytor, Kinlaw, Davis and Mayor Still, voted in affirmative. The motion was approved 5-1. It was opposed by Councilmember Myers.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

Water and Sewer (Councilmembers Claytor & Highsmith)

-The committee reported that the wastewater and water service design for the new high school is approximately 90–95% complete, with the project expected to be ready for bid by late October or early November.

- The Clinton Street water main loop, which will connect wells 6 through 10, is nearly complete pending approval of a wetland survey through DHEC.

Solid Waste and Maintenance (Councilmembers Davis & Highsmith)

-The city's mosquito spraying program is currently active. The public was reminded that concerns about mosquito issues in specific neighborhoods should be reported directly to City Hall rather than through social media, as staff will return to spray problem areas.

- Spraying occurs weekly for the first month of the season, then bi-weekly by zone through June and beyond.

Parks, Recreation and Tourism (Councilmembers Davis & Dixon)

- Fall sports programs are underway, including flag football, volleyball, and tackle football.

- A homecoming parade was scheduled for the following day at 4:00 PM.

- The annual Trick-or-Treat Around the Circle event is planned for Saturday, October 31, from 6:00–8:00 PM, with registration available via QR code flyer.

- Council Member Myers raised a question regarding an architectural mock-up prepared by Homes by Amy that had been submitted to JLA for cost estimation. Administrator Holcomb confirmed he had received the plans and stated that JLA is unable to proceed without a formal scope of work; he indicated a quote for that scope is available for \$35,000, which he agreed to share with the full Parks and Recreation committee.

Police (Councilmember Dixon and Kinlaw)

- The 287(g) program, paperwork has been submitted and the department is awaiting a response.

-Regarding the Flock camera system, a departmental use policy has been drafted and will be brought to Council for a vote at the next meeting. The Chief reported that an internal self-audit of the camera system was conducted in response to community questions raised on social media. The audit confirmed that all 69,337-license plate reads captured in the past 30 days were associated with legitimate investigative purposes, with no unauthorized access detected.

Successful outcomes aided by the Flock cameras were noted, including the recovery of stolen vehicles, assistance in the Allendale officer shooting investigation, and the apprehension of a repeat drunk driving suspect.

- Council Member Dixon confirmed that every access to the system has a corresponding investigative case. Administrator Holcomb noted that the system includes internal controls that flag any access lacking a case association, and that a monthly self-audit report will be provided to Council going forward.

- The Chief further noted that access to the Flock system requires prior approval from the Chief, Captain, or one of the two Lieutenants.

- A new police vehicle has been acquired and is currently being outfitted. One officer resigned during the reporting period to join a department in another area, leaving two open positions in the department.

Fire (Councilmember Claytor and Highsmith)

- Highlights included a mutual aid response to an Emily Mattress plant fire in Winnsboro on August 17 under the South Carolina Firefighter Mobilization program, continued participation in active violence response training with law enforcement, EMS, and neighboring fire departments, and ongoing joint training exercises with SRS over the following two weeks.

- The department also participated in the city's September 11 memorial program.

Finance and Salary (Councilmember Dixon and Kinlaw)

- Council Member Myers formally requested, on behalf of public commenter Bobby Smith, that the Finance and Salary Committee receive and consider his formal complaint against city staff members discussed during the public comment period, as that committee handles personnel grievances.

Building and Planning (Councilmember Claytor & Councilmember Myers)

- Council Member Myers requested a status update on the investigation related to Mr. Smith's property complaint. Administrator Holcomb reported that he is in regular contact—approximately three to four times per week—with state officials and FEMA Region 4 representatives. The matter is currently pending a FEMA decision on whether to accept a Letter of Map Amendment (LOMA) submitted by the builder. He confirmed that both state officials and FEMA Region 4 are in agreement with the city's interpretation of its ordinance and are supporting the city's position, and that he has that concurrence in writing.

- Separately, Council Member Davis raised the matter of a presentation by a development firm that wished to appear before Council regarding a potential project proposal. Administrator Holcomb noted that by ordinance, contractual matters cannot be discussed in executive session with the party, and that he had reached out to the firm to potentially schedule an agenda appearance. Council Member Myers raised concern about whether a presentation by that firm could disqualify

them from bidding on a future project under the city's procurement policy. Administrator Holcomb acknowledged that it could and indicated the firm should be made aware of that consideration before confirming any presentation.

Downtown Revitalization (Councilmember Myers and Kinlaw)

Council Member Myers noted that the committee had not met since the previous regular meeting, and that per the prior meeting's minutes, Administrator Holcomb had been tasked with preparing revisions to the wayfinding sign-ups and consulting with SCDOT prior to this meeting. Administrator Holcomb acknowledged the item was not completed and committed to having the updated mock-ups ready for review and approval at the next meeting.

Council Member Myers also requested an update on the deadline for the CPSC priority list, noting she has raised this issue at the last three or four meetings. Administrator Holcomb stated he would provide that information at the next meeting and offered to attend the committee meeting with the relevant deadlines.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Administrator Holcomb reported that he had received information from Shelley Broomfield regarding nominations for the Leadership South Carolina program, a nine-month initiative, and stated he would forward those details to Council for recommendations.

Administrator Holcomb also provided a brief update on the Blight program, noting modest cleanup activity in several areas. Properties with active or in-progress applications include the former Builder's Supply site at the intersection of Highway 64 and Patterson Street, a property on Hook Street, and properties on Church Street and Patterson Street.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Councilmember Davis made a motion to enter Executive Session for Consideration and Approval of the purchase and funding of Fuller Park Inclusive Playground Equipment from the State Bid of Cunninham Recreation and the execution of proposal. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Claytor and unanimously approved.

Mayor Still declared the Council was out of executive session.

Council Member Dixon made a Motion to accept the recommendation of the Parks and Recreation Committee to accept the proposal and contractual bid of Game Time/Cunningham Recreation for the purchase of Fuller Park Inclusive Playground Equipment, to fund the purchase from the Hospitality Tax Fund, and to authorize the City Administrator and/or Mayor to execute all contractual documents. The project will encourage both resident and non-resident participation and use. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Davis and unanimously approved.

MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION OF SC TRAINING- DESIREE FRAGOSO

Desiree Fragoso, Field Services Manager for the Lowcountry territory with the Municipal Association of South Carolina (MASC), delivered a governance training presentation to the Council. Ms. Fragoso noted she is a former city administrator with ten years of experience, and that all MASC field services managers share similar backgrounds. She emphasized that her services are available at no cost to member municipalities for technical assistance, training, and problem-solving.

The presentation centered on effective governance in the council form of government. Ms. Fragoso began by underscoring the importance of the oath of office as a guiding principle, particularly during periods of disagreement or difficulty. She noted that the science of governing differs fundamentally from campaigning—once elected, council members are part of a team, and consensus is required for any action to move forward.

Ms. Fragoso outlined a framework for team effectiveness based on the five foundational elements: trust, healthy conflict, commitment, accountability, and results. She explained that the absence of trust is the root cause of most team dysfunction, and that trust enables council members to engage in candid, healthy debate—the pursuit of the best possible answer—without it devolving into ego-driven or political conflict. She emphasized that dysfunction has real-world consequences, including reduced employee morale, difficulty recruiting quality staff, and deterring businesses and families from investing in the community.

On communication, Ms. Fragoso advised that council members should communicate their preferred format and frequency of information to staff, rather than assuming staff will know. She acknowledged the challenge of serving seven council members with varying communication preferences and encouraged both sides to find a workable balance. She also recommended that a procedure for how information is requested and disseminated—whether formal or informal—be established by the body.

The discussion touched on the question of agenda-setting authority. Ms. Fragoso confirmed there is no statutory rule in South Carolina dictating who sets the agenda, and that this is determined by each body's rules of procedure. She affirmed that council members should be able to have items added to the agenda, and that a written procedure establishing clear expectations would be helpful in preventing recurring conflicts around this issue. She also addressed the role of the city administrator—noting that in the council form of government, the council body has both legislative and administrative authority, but typically delegates day-to-day administrative authority to the administrator, who is then accountable to the full body. She stressed the importance of council members staying in their policy-making lane while empowering staff to carry out administrative operations, as deviating from that role can expose individual council members to personal legal liability.

Council Member Myers raised specific concern about instances in which the city administrator had instructed outside vendors and state agencies not to communicate with her directly and noted she had documentation of this from multiple parties. Ms. Fragoso declined to assess the specific

situation but addressed the general principle: establishing a clear chain of command and a designated point of contact for city communications is important for presenting a unified voice. She also validated that elected officials have a right to communicate with other government entities and stakeholders, and that setting a clear written policy around communication expectations can help prevent these kinds of conflicts. Councilmember Myers abruptly walked out of the Municipal Association Training and council meeting before a motion was made to adjourn.

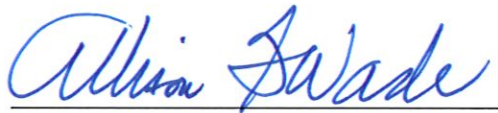
Mayor Still asked Ms. Fragoso for practical suggestions on how to rebuild mutual respect among council members when outreach attempts have been rejected. Ms. Fragoso encouraged council members to humanize one another, recognize the shared sacrifice of public service, and attempt direct, face-to-face conversation. She acknowledged the limits of this approach but noted that respectful, productive governance ultimately reflects on the community's ability to attract residents, businesses, and qualified employees.

Administrator Holcomb asked Council whether they felt he was providing sufficient communication and invited feedback, offering to blind-copy all council members on relevant correspondence while cautioning members not to reply all to avoid FOIA violations. He emphasized that his door and phone are always open to Council members.

MOTION TO ADJOURN

Councilmember Dixon made a motion to adjourn. The motion was seconded by Councilmember Highsmith and unanimously approved.

Submitted by:



Allison S. Wade, Asst. Clerk