

City Council Minutes
January 19, 2021

Orangeburg City Council held its regularly scheduled meeting on Facebook Live via Zoom on Tuesday, January 19, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., with Mayor Michael C. Butler presiding.

PRESENT:

Michael C. Butler, Mayor
Dr. Kalu Kalu

PRESENT BY TELEPHONE:

Bernard Haire
Jerry Hannah
L. Zimmerman Keitt
Sandra P. Knotts
Richard F. Stroman

Mayor Butler called the meeting to order by roll call of Councilmembers.

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu and seconded by Councilmember Stroman to approve the January 5, 2021 City Council minutes. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to approve the January 14, 2021 Special City Council minutes. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Interim City Administrator Singh addressed Council concerning second reading of a permanent Ordinance and an Emergency Ordinance extending and consolidating mayoral proclamation, Emergency Ordinances numbers 2020-04 and 2020-13 and supplementing sections 3 and 4 of Executive Order Number 2020-63 of the Governor of the State of South Carolina. He stated, "This will place our emergency ordinances in a permanent position since the pandemic has continued and will make it a little easier for us procedurally in terms of making things work. Mr. Walsh or I will be glad to answer any additional questions."

A motion was made by Councilmember Haire and seconded by Councilmember Keitt to approve the second reading of a permanent Ordinance and an Emergency Ordinance extending and consolidating mayoral proclamation, Emergency Ordinances numbers 2020-04 and 2020-13 and supplementing sections 3 and 4 of Executive Order Number 2020-63 of the Governor of the State of South Carolina. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Interim City Administrator Singh addressed Council concerning third reading of Ordinance prescribing the dates and times of the regular meetings of City Council in compliance with South Carolina Code Section 5-7-250. He stated, "This is the third reading of our ordinance changing the time of our Council meetings from 7:00 PM to 6:00 PM. This is a procedural item because our time is set by ordinance, so we are finishing the third reading on it."

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt and seconded by Councilmember Stroman to approve the third reading of Ordinance prescribing the dates and times of the regular meetings of City Council in compliance with South Carolina Code Section 5-7-250 moving City Council meetings from 7:00 PM to 6:00 PM. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Interim City Administrator Singh addressed Council concerning a resolution to support the Municipal Association 2021 Legislative Advocacy Initiative. He stated, "I want to highlight a few of these to include broadband, abandoned buildings, enclave annexation which is where we have donut holes, code enforcement and being able to apply liens to properties and the last item I wanted to point out was the local government fund."

A motion was made by Councilmember Haire and seconded by Councilmember Knotts to approve the resolution to support the Municipal Association 2021 Legislative Advocacy Initiative. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Interim City Administrator Singh addressed Council concerning update on COVID protocols. He stated, "We have put together a package for Council displaying some of what we have done in the past for COVID to include encouraging citizens to wear masks, social distance and ~~2020~~ their hands. On the screen is Protect and Respect that we plan to share on Facebook. We also have static stickers we will pass out to businesses encouraging their customers to wear masks, social distance, hand sanitizing and hand washing. We have been in the pandemic for some time now, and it's not the time to become complacent. We have an ample supply of PPE for our employees. We have been working to keep that stockpile up. We always want to have masks, disinfectant, gloves and sanitizer available to all employees. We have added more cleaning protocols to our regular weekly cleaning. We use positive ion misters throughout our buildings. The golf course uses Hawk to clean the driving range balls as well as cleaning the golf carts every day. We have a radio campaign beginning that encourages the public to take protective measures to help reduce the spread of the virus. The other big topic is vaccines. Currently, in South Carolina we are in Phase 1A which are healthcare workers and some rescue, ambulance medical staff as well as nursing homes and it was expanded to anyone 70 and older. It has been difficult in terms of being able to get lined up to get a vaccine in South Carolina to include here in Orangeburg. From the City component, some of our DPS staff have already been vaccinated at the hospital. There is a shortage for whatever reason right here in Orangeburg and I know the hospital is working on that. When 1B comes into effect, we have our clinic ready to go to vaccinate the City and DPU critical workers. We are estimating the first part of February to mid-February. Ms. Williams, our HR Officer, has done a great job in prepping the gym. The partitions are up, and we are ready when the vaccinates arrive. As soon as what they call drop the vaccines down to our providers, we will be ready to go. As soon as we can help the public, especially the older members of our public, to help them know where to get in touch with agencies to get appointments, we will do everything we can do on our end to help."

Councilmember Haire asked "Do we know what cities have received the vaccine at this point?"

Interim City Administrator Singh stated, "Reading the paper, I understand Calhoun and Bamberg Counties have received some vaccines. On the news, the Sherriff of Richland County has been vaccinated and the Fire Chief of Columbia. This led to the concern we had of trying to get our Public Safety officers vaccinated which fortunately our local hospital has helped us. Technically if you go by DHEC standards, those should be more in 1B than in 1A. But a lot of our officers, respond to accidents and interact with people that may have COVID. I am aware that Conway General Hospital has given some vaccines. It has very sporadic across the state, it has been very hit or miss with information. I am aware the Regional Medical Center has been getting some vaccines."

Councilmember Haire stated, "I noticed yesterday that one of the Richland County Councilmembers setup on their own, procedures to help individuals that can not complete the online signups and to assist individuals to get around the obstacles they are having. I have spoken with County Chairman Wright and hopefully we can do something like that in Orangeburg because there a lot of people in Orangeburg who can not do the necessary maneuvering to be able to sign up. And if we are not assisting people to get appointments its to no avail. Hopefully we can work with the County to speed up the registration and help get the citizens connected. I am a little disappointed that the speed is not what I would have hoped."

Interim City Administrator Singh stated, "Councilmember Haire you bring up a lot of great points. I do want to let Council know that we have been hand in hand working with the Orangeburg County Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and with DPU Manager and HR Officer. We have had two or three conference calls between EOC and our staffs. Mr. Harley, myself and Billy Staley were on the phone last Friday with Low Country DHEC which services Orangeburg. I concur with everything you are saying, and we certainly want to help anyone who is having trouble getting in touch with the correct agency. We will setup another conference call with Mr. Staley so we can talk more about ways that we can work with the County to help with that process. You bring up a great point, especially when you get in the 70 plus range as not as many use a computer. So that is a big deal. As fast as we can get phone numbers posted, we will."

Councilmember Haire stated, "Today I heard the City's Public Service Announcement (PSA) on the radio. I thought it was a very good PSA reminding people they still need to wear masks and social distance. I want to thank staff for getting this message out."

Councilmember Hannah asked, "What are we directly saying to our businesses regarding wearing masks and how many radio stations are we on?"

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Interim City Administrator Singh stated, "We are packaged with The Community Broadcaster, LLC group to include The Cat 105.3, Almighty 94.5, News Talk 97.1, Old Skool 10.9. We will be getting the static stickers for businesses to put it on their windows reminding mask wearing, social distancing and hand sanitizing. Also, DPU is working on a buck slip to be included in the utility bills to remind customers of mask wearing, social distancing and sanitizing hands."

Mayor Butler stated, "The next item is discussion of combination collection of City and County taxes on one bill. Councilmember Haire asked for this item to be on the agenda."

Councilmember Haire stated, "I was troubled when I received my tax bill that both City and County taxes are on one bill and have to be paid at the same time to avoid penalties. It does not hurt me to pay both at the same time. I feel there are too many people who under current situations cannot pay both taxes at the same time. This will have you getting delinquent tax notices from both. When was the decision made to put these taxes together?"

Mayor Butler stated, "We talked about this in the budget cycle and how this would make it more efficient in the collection of property taxes. I will ask Ms. Johnson to tell you the good news we have heard."

Finance Director Carrie Johnson addressed Council. She stated, "We have received many calls and 99% of them have all been favorable thanking us for making this change. The citizens have thanked us for making it only one bill and not having to keep up with two bills from two different places. They are very grateful that all taxes are on one bill. We are saving money by doing this as well which I think was also brought up during the budget cycle. Notices were published on our website, social media and the Times and Democrat. There was also verbiage on the County bill that the City taxes were included."

Councilmember Haire asked, "Do you have a collections comparison of where we are now as compared to last year?"

Director Johnson replied, "I will have that data at the end of January and can let you know."

Councilmember Haire stated, "I really do not know if a lot of people realize that this happened."

Mayor Butler asked, "What about software?"

Director Johnson replied, "The County's software and our software do not match, and the County changed software again last year. Having a joint sale is almost a nightmare because the documentation has to be checked with the County to make sure they did not sell a property prior and at the last minute I may be pulling items from the sale because the documentation is not there and now it will be one total sale."

Mayor Butler stated, "After this cycle, installments can be made."

Director Johnson replied, "Installments can be made at the County and there should be no delinquent penalties if paid in the correct installments."

Councilmember Keitt stated, "I have received no calls or complaints and people have thanked us because it is easier this way, I am pleased with it."

Mayor Pro Tem Kalu asked about the charges from the County.

Director Johnson stated, "Prior to 1994, the County charged us. The County is collecting for the other 17 municipalities so therefore they are no longer charging for this."

Councilmember Hannah stated, "I understand this and echo Mr. Haire's comments because this is the first time of the process and even if it is in the paper and on five radio stations, some are not going to know. We should also keep in our mind, that some may slip through the cracks. Some

challenges are going to happen. I am 100% for it, but if you put a new traffic light on the corner, someone is going to complain."

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu and seconded by Councilmember ~~2003~~ enter Executive Session concern Legal Matter A. Receipt of legal advice relating to potential claims and investigative proceedings regarding allegations of criminal misconduct S. C. Code Secs. 30-4-70 (a)(2) and (4) and Personnel Matter A. Discussion and receipt of legal advice regarding employment and appointment of City Administrator and B. Discussion and receipt of legal advice regarding contractual matters and the selection of a City Administrator. S. C. Code Sec. 30-4-70 (a)(1) & (2). The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu and seconded by Councilmember Keitt to return to open session. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Attorney Steve Savitz addressed Council. He stated, "The last time that Council met to interview the candidates, they decided if it was proper to vote by signing a ballot and giving it to Human Resources and opening the ballots tonight. After looking into it, this has come up many times in other areas and even in the legislature. This would not cause issues with people voting and not knowing how certain people were voting and causing pressure and changing votes during an open session going down a list. However, the Human Resource Director and City Clerk are now going to open the ballots, tally them and give them to the Mayor. The Mayor will then read the votes and confirm the votes and if anyone would like to change their votes, they can be changed at that time. These ballots will become a part of the public record."

The Mayor read each ballot with the Councilmember's name and how they voted.

Councilmember Stroman	John Singh
Councilmember Keitt	Sidney Evering
Councilmember Knotts	Sidney Evering
Councilmember Haire	Sidney Evering
Mayor Pro Tem Kalu	Sidney Evering
Mayor Michael Butler	Sidney Evering
Councilmember Hannak	Sidney Evering

Mayor Butler asked, "Does anyone want to change their vote? Do I have a motion for the candidate with the most votes?"

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu and seconded by Councilmember Haire to approve the candidate, Mr. Sidney Evering, with the most votes for City Administrator. The motion was approved 6-0-1, Councilmember Stroman opposed.

Mayor Butler stated, "Mr. Singh, you have done a good job in the interim and I hope you will stay with us in moving this City forward. Thank you."

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu and seconded by Councilmember Keitt to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved by roll call vote.

Respectfully submitted,


Carrie Johnson
City Clerk

/lrm



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VOID

VOID

VOID

VOID



**A RESOLUTION TO SUPPORT THE MUNICIPAL ASSOCIATION
2021 LEGISLATIVE ADVOCACY INITIATIVE**

- BE IT RESOLVED,** cities and towns in South Carolina are the government closest to the people providing the core services residents and businesses demand for an exceptional quality of life; and,
- WHEREAS,** local decisions affecting residents and local businesses should be made by local leaders; and,
- WHEREAS,** cities and towns seek to make numerous small changes in current state law to support new and existing local industry and businesses, changes in public health and safety, and continuity of service delivery; and,
- WHEREAS,** cities and towns seek to support legislation that adds more tools to the toolbox for local governments to expand and create programs to help residents and businesses; and,
- WHEREAS,** the City of Orangeburg fully supports the 2021 advocacy initiatives set forth by the Municipal Association of South Carolina Board of Directors for city and town councils to govern effectively and efficiently; and,
- WHEREAS,** seek to amend the newly adopted broadband expansion law to allow cities and towns to not only lay fiber, but also light the fiber or partner with a third party to light it. Lighting fiber, or activating the cable to make internet access available, is critical to expanding broadband. To further make broadband accessible to everyone, cities and towns should be allowed to make this service available; and,
- WHEREAS,** allowing cities and towns to close enclaves, also known as doughnut holes, in their municipal limits through a local annexation process is a long-standing issue. Cities and towns have long advocated for closing enclaves that prevent consistent and efficient service delivery; and,
- WHEREAS,** supporting reform measures to aspects of law enforcement training and practices will be important in 2021. Both the House and Senate are currently studying and taking testimony from experts on changes to current law enforcement practices; and,
- WHEREAS,** requiring code enforcement liens to be billed and collected, similar to property taxes, is critical in the fight against blight. Cities and towns struggle with paying for the remediation of dilapidated buildings and properties. Recovering these costs through the property tax collection process would allow cities and towns to maintain property standards more effectively; and,
- WHEREAS,** extending the current abandoned buildings tax credit to 2022, which provides for additional local economic development incentives, will be valuable as the state's economy recovers. These incentives have proven successful for cities, towns and developers in attracting new projects to communities; and,
- WHEREAS,** because of the coronavirus, legislators did not pass a state budget for fiscal year 2020-2021. The continuing budget resolution they passed did not include any additional funding in the Local Government Fund. Calling for the Local Government Fund to be funded in accordance with current law will be important for the fiscal year 2022 budget; and,

WHEREAS, The Municipal Association supports the inclusion of money in the state budget to fund the Firefighter Healthcare Benefit Plan. Legislators passed a bill in 2020 that would offer monetary benefits to South Carolina firefighters diagnosed with cancer. For the bill to take effect, lawmakers must appropriate money in the budget; and,

WHEREAS, supporting money to be included in the state budget to fund the Post Traumatic Stress Disorder programs for first responders is an ongoing issue. For several years, the General Assembly has included \$500,000 in the state budget for programs to support first responders who experience a traumatic event. The Association will seek to ensure funds continue to be included; and,

WHEREAS, cities and towns with no property tax millage should be allowed to impose a millage who now need to do so. The restrictions in Act 388 prevent them from adding millage. The Senate passed a zero-millage bill in 2020, but the bill came to a stop on the House floor later in the session; and,

WHEREAS, creating a Municipal Capital Projects penny tax for municipal residents to approve for capital projects within the city limits is an initiative important to cities and towns within counties that do not have a capital projects tax; and,

WHEREAS, the Municipal Association supports expanding the availability of naloxone, the medication used to revive individuals suffering from drug overdoses, to fire and emergency medical services first responders; and,

WHEREAS, the Textiles communities Revitalization Act needs to be amended to include as one site those parts of abandoned mill properties that are separated by way of an intervening connector, such as a railroad or waterway.

BE IT, THEREFORE, RESOLVED that the Council of the City of Orangeburg affirms on this 19th day of January 2021, its support for the Municipal Association's 2021 advocacy initiatives for the benefit of all of South Carolina's 271 cities and towns.

DONE AND RATIFIED THIS 19th DAY OF JANUARY 2021.



Michael C. Butch
MAYOR

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MEMBERS OF COUNCIL

ATTEST:
[Signature]
City Clerk