

**City Council Minutes**  
**August 3, 2021**

Orangeburg City Council held its regularly scheduled meeting on Facebook Live via Zoom on Tuesday, August 3, 2021, at 10:00 AM with Mayor Michael C. Butler presiding.

**PRESENT:**

**Michael C. Butler, Mayor**  
**Dr. Kalu Kalu, Mayor Pro Tem**  
**Bernard Haire**  
**Jerry Hannah**  
**L. Zimmerman Keitt**  
**Sandra P. Knotts**  
**Richard F. Stroman**

A motion was made by Councilmember Stroman, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to approve the June 15, 2021; City Council minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to approve the July 13, 2021, City Council Budget Workshop minutes. The motion was unanimously approved.

Mayor Butler recognized "Patriotism" as the August 2021 Orangeburg County Community of Character trait. Patriotism is vigorous and devoted love, defense, and support for one's country; loyalty; allegiance.

Mr. Matt Stokes, Chairman of the Orangeburg County Fair Association addressed Council. He stated, "The Fair would like to annex 25 acres into the City. We have a plot that is basically the parking lot that is not in the City. We do not pay taxes. It would be a plus for us for support from the Department of Public Safety and DPU. DPU is using five acres of our lot currently for their renovations. We would request to be annexed in whole into the City."

Councilmember Haire asked City Attorney Walsh, "Since they are contiguous, can the Fair complete a petition?"

City Attorney Walsh replied, "The Board would need to assign someone to sign the petition as 100% to start the process. Matt, call me at the office and we can go over the details."

Councilmember Keitt also asked, "There are people right behind there on Travers Street that want to come in, what do they need to do?"

City Attorney Walsh stated, "Just call me and I will explain it. They will need the 75% petition method."

Chief Adams stated, "Due to the weather, the National Night out has been cancelled but will be rescheduled soon. We had many sponsors and activities, but the weather is calling for thunderstorms."

Councilmember Haire asked "How are you going to publicize the rescheduling? Are you going to put it on the news?"

Chief Adams responded, "We will put it on social media and our new Public Information Officer will send it out to all the local news outlets."

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Councilmember Stroman to approve the third reading of an Ordinance amending Chapter 19, titled, "Flood Damage Prevention" of the Code of Ordinances for the City of Orangeburg to adopt the required State Flood Damage Prevention Model Ordinance in compliance with State and Federal Program requirements, and other related matters. The motion was unanimously approved.

City Administrator Evering addressed Council concerning South Carolina Aeronautics Commission Grant Funding to repaint the beacon tower at the Orangeburg Municipal Airport. He

stated, "We have been notified by the South Carolina Aeronautics Commission (SCAC) that the Orangeburg Municipal Airport (OGB) will be receiving project funds for the painting of the airport beacon tower for \$14,000. The total estimated cost is \$19,000 which would require a local match from the City of \$5,000. We are asking for Council's authorization for the City Administrator to sign the grant agreement."

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu, seconded by Councilmember Keitt to authorize the City Administrator to sign acceptance of South Carolina Aeronautics Commission (SCAC) Grant Agreement for project funds for the painting of the Orangeburg Municipal Airport (OGB) beacon tower \$14,000. The motion was unanimously approved.

Assistant City Administrator Singh reviewed the highlights of the amended budget for Fiscal Year 2020-21. He stated, "Every year as you are aware as we go through our budget process we reflect on our current budget. I will go over a few items in the current budget. COVID has been one of the largest struggles that we have been through with \$600,000 reimbursed. Business Licenses tend to go up and down with the transition of the business license ordinance. One of the biggest items was we switched our patrol car purchases from a lease purchase loan program to Enterprise Leasing. This program has worked out well for the City. We were able to replace a heavy rescue truck that was totaled with a used heavy rescue truck. We have some new employees that came on board to include an assistant for our Human Resource Department and the Public Information Officer. Every year we have had a fund balance. This year, we appear to be landing about \$854,385 in our fund balance. We had a few expenses such as legal fees that moved the budget up a little."

Mayor Pro Tem Kalu asked, "Were the cars kept or sold that were replaced with leased vehicles?"

Assistant City Administrator Singh stated, "By the time we are finished with a vehicle, it may sell for \$1,500 - \$2,000. We traded those vehicles to Enterprise for a little more money but not much."

Mayor Pro Tem Kalu asked, "What happens if we do not get the money from the County?"

Assistant City Administrator Singh stated, "It will have a significant impact. I will remind Council as we are working with the County on the fire tax if the fire tax comes in, it will certainly bring us more in line to purchase the fire vehicles."

Mayor Pro Tem Kalu asked, "Are there any tax increases for citizens?"

Assistant City Administrator Singh stated, "No, the millage stayed the same in the current amended budget and is also staying the same in the new fiscal year budget."

Councilmember Stroman stated, "This is a good program. Leasing is the way to go."

Assistant City Administrator Singh stated, "We are finding more municipalities are beginning to look at leasing. The biggest problem is by the time you run a vehicle through its service, the vehicle may have 60-70,000 miles on it. A police car with 60-70,000 miles is like a personal vehicle having 120-150,000 miles. Unfortunately, you must start somewhere. Enterprise purchases the vehicles to reduce your cost and then sells them wholesale. This is a good program for the City."

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu, seconded by Councilmember Keitt to approve the first reading of an Ordinance to amend the budget for the City of Orangeburg SC for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021. The motion was unanimously approved.

City Administrator Evering stated, "The new proposed fiscal year budget is \$23,800,000. This does not include an increase in millage. A few items that I would like to highlight are 1% cost of living increase for all employees. We also are implementing an evaluation system later in this year and setting aside some funding for bonuses for performance. The revenue items I would like to highlight are no tax or other fee increases at this time, there is an increase in insurance business license fees, an increase in fire income due to implementation of Fire Tax District in conjunction with Orangeburg County, an increase in Opportunity Zone revenue due to sale of future City Hall building, and addition of revenue for the Forensic Drug Lab from grant funding and use by other agencies and increase of DPU transfer. Other notable items are we are looking at installing

cameras at the Boardwalk and Memorial Gardens, signage at the recreational complex, and adding a skatepark. We are continuing work on the Railroad Corner Project.”

Mayor Butler asked, “Can you explain the payout for comp time?”

City Administrator Evering stated, “This is an amount we would have to payout for comp time to comply with legal recommendations regarding needed changes to existing Wage Policy for the City.”

Mayor Pro Tem Kalu asked, “Are you using some type of template for these performance appraisals as everyone’s jobs are different?”

City Administrator Evering stated, “It will be mostly standardized. There are different responsibilities in different departments but there will be broad categories. We are still working on how that evaluation system will actually work.”

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to approve the first reading of an Ordinance to adopt the budget for the City of Orangeburg SC Fiscal Year October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022. The motion was unanimously approved.

Department of Public Utilities Manager, Warren Harley, addressed Council concerning the first reading of an Ordinance to amend the Budget for the Operation of the Department of Public Utilities for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021. He stated, “We bring this amendment for our current year’s fiscal budget so as the numbers are cleared up over the year, we want to have a more accurate picture. The numbers that you see could change between now and the third reading so we will make note of any changes that might occur before the final approval on the current year’s amended budget.”

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu, seconded by Councilmember Knotts to approve the first reading of an Ordinance to amend the budget for the Operation of the Department of Public Utilities for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2020, through September 30, 2021. The motion was unanimously approved.

Manager Harley stated, “The second item is our proposed budget for fiscal year October 1, 2021, to September 30, 2022. As required by law, we present to you this budget for your approval. The details are already in your packets that were given to you in June. We have since updated the information included in your packets. Just for your knowledge, that should be on the front cover of your packets that you have. As Mr. Evering mentioned, there is a onetime increase amount to the transfer to \$1.2 million. We are also going to have the \$400,000 increase that will be a permanent increase going forward. That is not a change in our discussion from June, but the \$1.2 million is a change. Also, we have added three positions. One position is in the Electric Division and the other two positions are in the Water Division, so I want to make sure you are aware of those. Also, we included the amount of \$15,000 in the budget for an update on our wage and compensation survey, so we are evaluating what we are doing going forward. As you know, the City and DPU did the Archer Study about four years ago. We realize that on an on-going basis, every three of four years, we would need to revisit what we have done to keep those up to date so we have budgeted for those. We are also in conversations with Mr. Evering to see if the opportunity is there to partner with a group, but one of the things we want to focus on is to make sure we have a group that is familiar with utilities and the relative groups that we work with like water, gas, sewer, and electric. We are evaluating opportunities for companies based on that. I want to bring your attention to the things that we focused on in our budget, proposed funding levels in our capital and operational budgets, maintaining operational service levels, and addressing issues with sluggish economy. We also want to maintain our performance programs. We have evaluations of employees on an annual basis and three points are taken into consideration, years of service, evaluation score, and where they are in their pay range. Those go into a formula that dictates what kind of raise they would get. We are working to continue our Capital Improvement Plan. You will notice in your packets we focused a lot on upgrading and having a utility system that could withstand the things we have to deal with as it pertains to severe weather. We do not have any proposed rate increase scheduled in this budget. We worked very hard to try to make sure that we did not have a rate increase. Still dealing with COVID, we are trying not to place any

further burden on anyone. That is not to say that it is not something we will not be visiting in the future as things begin to clear up, but at this point, there is no rate increase in this budget. The total revenues are budgeted to increase about 2% from \$98.7 million to just over \$100 million in Fiscal Year 2022. Operating Expenses are budgeted to increase about 3.5% from \$84.7 million to \$87.8 million in 2022. Income before the transfer is budgeted for \$12.2 million for 2022 and currently in our amended budget it is \$11.9 million. Also, we are projected to use a significant amount of cash. As was mentioned to you at the budget retreat, we are looking at drawing down our cash about \$27 million on projects that Council has reviewed and approved. These are things that will improve our system and make us safe for our employees and our customers to make it more resilient and reliable. Other notable items I would like to point out \$400,000 has been added to the Economic Development Revolving Fund that Council created bringing the total in that fund to \$2 million. If you recall, Council approved a policy on how we would participate in economic development with this fund, so we have established that to make sure we have the necessary funds set aside to encourage or assist when we have the opportunity to create economic development. Also included in this budget is a total of three new positions in operations, one in Electric Division and two in Water Division. These are to improve and assist for ones retiring. We want to get them in place and in line so they can be trained and ready as vacancies occur. There is no new debt included in this budget. Those are all the high points. We believe this is a responsible budget that will help us provide the best service to our community and keep our system strong and resilient.”

Councilmember Hannah asked, “Since technology changes so quickly, do you feel confident that we are moving in the right direction?”

Manager Harley responded, “We have in the budget our normal technology upgrades that make our system more efficient. We are in the midst of accepting proposals for our next purchase power agreement so that is going to be what drives our costs going forward. We hope that we have a lot of participation. At this point, it seems that we have a lot of interest in bidding on our proposal.”

Councilmember Haire asked, “What is the cutoff date for the proposal?”

Manager Harley responded, “October 30<sup>th</sup>.”

Councilmember Haire asked, “Based on what is going on in Congress as far as infrastructure, have we been thinking in terms of putting together ideas that you might have for projects that you may request funds for if the infrastructure bill is passed.”

Manager Harley responded, “We have been watching very closely what is coming out of Washington and keeping up with our trade associations, like Public Power Association to see what opportunities might be out there for funding. We are also talking with state agencies about possibilities for the future as they receive them so we might be able to access them for infrastructure improvements. In our current budget we are planning, Mr. Odom has worked on a PER (Preliminary Engineering Report) for a particular area in our community, but we are trying to pursue funding from several state agencies.”

Mayor Pro Tem Kalu asked, “We have a strong safety net against someone hacking the system?”

Manager Harley responded, “Yes sir, we take proper precautions after working for several years with the Department of Homeland Defense on helping us identify vulnerabilities. We are also planning to do something in this upcoming budget to further assess how we can fortify and strengthen our system.”

City Administrator Evering stated, “Likewise, we have an excellent grants writer, she keeps her finger on the pulse of what is going on in funding. We also are going to start doing some strategic planning and planning for downtown.”

Councilmember Keitt asked for everyone to kind to one another, smile, and help people as much as possible and to please remember everyone that we serve is a human being.

Manager Harley stated, “We do training and call coaching every year. Mr. Nexsen and his team along with customer service representatives and specific individuals in the divisions participate in that call coaching. We are listening on a regular basis to our customer service and other people in our organization and how they are treating customers. If we hear things that are outside of our policy, we address it quickly and make sure that we are projecting a friendly and understanding environment. Each customer deserves that.”

City Administrator Evering added, “I am big on customer service. We have done customer service training for our directors and supervisors. You are absolutely correct Ms. Keitt, and I hope that is the message that has gotten across.”

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Councilmember Knotts to approve the first reading of an Ordinance to adopt a budget for the Operation of the Department of Public Utilities for the Fiscal Year October 1, 2021, through September 30, 2022. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Councilmember Stroman, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to go into Executive Session for Legal and Contractual Matter (a.) Synergy Utilities-Northwood Estates, S.C. Code Sec. 30-4-70(a) (2). Legal Matter (a.) Discussion of settlement of legal claim – Nathaniel Williams v. City of Orangeburg S.C. Code 30-4-70 (a)(2). Legal Matter (a.) Discussion of potential claim – Department of Public Safety S.C. Code Sec. 30-4-70 (a)(2). The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Councilmember Stroman, seconded by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu to return to open session. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Mayor Pro Tem Kalu, seconded by Councilmember Keitt to approve the claim of \$10,000 for Nathaniel Williams. The motion was unanimously approved.

A motion was made by Councilmember Keitt, seconded by Councilmember Stroman to adjourn. The motion was unanimously approved.

Respectfully submitted,



Carrie Johnson  
City Clerk

/lrm

