

Town of Kiawah Island
INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE
Council Chambers Meeting Room
June 5, 2025; 10:00 am

Minutes

I. **Call to Order:** *Chairman Spencer called the meeting to order at 10:00 am.*

II. **Roll Call:**

Present at the Meeting: Lance Spencer, Chairman
David DeStefano
Brad McIlvain
Philip Mancusi-Ungaro
John Shippee
Warren Stannard
Brian Gottshalk

Also Present: Russell Berner, *Mayor Pro Tem*
Jody Forrest, *Kiawah Island Community Association*
Plamen Dimitrov, *Kiawah Island Golf Resort*
Tom Nevin, *Kiawah Partners*
Bert Walling, *Berkeley Electric Co-operative, Director of Key Accounts and Government Relations*

III. **Citizens' Comments (Agenda Items Only):**
None

IV. **Approval of Minutes:**

A. Minutes of the Infrastructure and Public Works meeting of May 1, 2025

Chairman Spencer asked if there were any changes to the minutes of the May 1st meeting. He indicated that he made some minor edits, which had been incorporated into those presented.

With no other changes, the minutes were approved.

V. **Service Provider Presentation:**

A. Berkeley Electric Co-op

Chairman Spencer stated that the Town has been working to strengthen its relationship with utility service providers at several levels through committee dialogues. One of the focuses of the committee discussion is building a dialogue, so he introduced Bert Walling, the Director of Key Accounts and Government Relations at Berkeley Electric Cooperative, who would discuss the island's electric infrastructure and have a friendly conversation about Berkeley Electric in general. It was noted that since Berkeley Electric is a not-for-profit investor-owned utility, rates would not be part of the conversation.

Chairman Spencer stated that the letter provided to Berkeley Electric outlined some of the Committee's questions and concerns.

Bert Walling began his presentation by establishing the relationship between Berkeley Electric

gone underwater. Guess what happens? They corrode."

Brad McIlvain asked about determining equipment end-of-life, to which Mr. Walling explained it's based on how many times the equipment has been used, its age, and exposure to water.

Mr. Walling discussed current projects, including bidding for replacements from the Kiawah regulator station - approximately 3,000 feet of pipe and 3,000 feet of cable. "Once again, that is giving you more redundancy, another outlet," he explained.

The Committee extensively discussed why Berkeley shuts down power preemptively during storms. Mr. Walling explained: "We can let it run. Hope everything goes fine. Did you get a king tide during a storm? All the green boxes fill up. They're protected. They're fused. They'll shut down. It could be a lot of arcing. Could be a lot of problems. Therefore, it's a proactive approach to shut it down, de-energize all the equipment, reassess after the storm with the help of the fire department to open every single cabinet, wash it with clean water, then pull them back down, let it dry, and flip the switch. Or if you want to go to the other option, wait months."

Phillip Mancusi-Ungaro recalled issues from 2021 when transformers were "basically blowing all over the place" after power was restored. Mr. Walling acknowledged this as a lesson learned, explaining they now have protocols for rinsing and drying equipment.

When asked about whole-house generators on the island, Mr. Walling said he didn't have specific numbers but had heard there might be interest in conducting a survey similar to one done for EVs.

Plamen Dimitrov asked about the Kiawah substation's protection from water levels. Mr. Walling explained it's in an area far from erosion, though not fully protected from all scenarios, but noted "that steel is up in the air. All the live parts are up in the air. It's not underground."

Discussion about transmission lines and the Kiawah River Bridge revealed that lines run underground, not attached to the bridge itself, at approximately 4 feet underground. The committee confirmed that even if the line from Seabrook to Kiawah went out, they could still back-feed from other stations.

Mr. Walling addressed future capacity for resort development and other growth, stating simply, "Yes. We have plenty of power. We've got a new transmission loop. We've got additional power transformers. So we're ahead of your growth."

When Chairman Spencer asked about funding, Mr. Walling clarified that Berkeley provides all infrastructure unless a developer wants "a special source of power outside the normal scope," in which case they would pay for that.

The discussion shifted to South Carolina's overall power situation. Mr. Walling revealed: "As a state, we're running out of power... Last week, I had to tell somebody no. Never, never, never had this idea." He explained that this affects economic development, but assured the committee that Kiawah is not affected by these statewide constraints.

The committee discussed franchise agreements extensively. Mr. Walling, who brought materials proactively, explained the current 3% rate and suggested that most communities moving to renewal go to 5%. He provided context about why Dominion is involved in some agreements: "We partnered with Dominion. And, basically, it's a trust factor. Dominion knows that they can't come over here, and I know I can't go over there. It's by law."

Brad McIlvain raised the question of whether franchise agreements could include regulatory requirements for reporting. The discussion revealed that the town doesn't currently receive automatic notifications about Berkeley outages - they must call to inquire.

Mr. Walling concluded by showing investment figures for Kiawah Island and offering to be

available for follow-up questions. Chairman Spencer thanked him for the comprehensive presentation and suggested scheduling a follow-up site visit to address the exposed conduit concerns raised by committee members.

VI. Old Business:

A. Cellular and Fiber to the Home Improvements Update

Chairman Spencer provided an update on cellular improvements, reporting that the planning commission had taken up the committee's recommendation at their recent meeting. He noted there's urgency because of active conversations about the first upgrade cell site at the Ocean Course.

"I'm confident that the planning commission will support the recommendation for you to forward. They formed a subcommittee. They've asked me to meet with them next week to kind of, you know, work through their concerns," Spencer reported. He explained the planning commission is "ramping up now" and wants to be responsible in their role.

Chairman Spencer indicated the planning commission would likely take this up at their July meeting, with it proceeding to council in August. Regarding the installation timeline, he stated they met on-site with Crown Castle two weeks prior, and installation would likely occur "later in 2025" with upgrades happening around January.

Russell Berner raised concerns about planning commission pushback regarding tower height: "The communications groups, they all want 150 feet, but the planning commission was pushing on whether they should be that high or not. I don't know where that's going to end up."

David DeStefano emphasized the stark choice: "It's pretty much 150 or nothing... It's almost that black and white." He warned about potential backlash if the planning commission rejected the height requirement: "If this thing doesn't go forward because the planning commission says under 20 feet and gets around the island, our cell coverage is going to be bad forever."

Brad McIlvain suggested proactive communication to educate the public, proposing joint communication from both KICA and the Town explaining why the upgrades are needed for safety. The committee discussed emphasizing that towers are needed for emergency services, alarm systems, and critical infrastructure monitoring.

Plamen Dimitrov added that Berkeley Electric uses cellular for monitoring and control, and many home alarm systems now rely on cellular connectivity. The committee agreed to draft educational materials highlighting these public safety aspects.

B. Discussion on Franchise Agreements (focus on next actions to update/renew)

The committee continued discussing franchise agreements following Berkeley Electric's presentation. Phil Mancusi-Ungaro noted that while Berkeley's agreement is valid until 2036, it lacks reporting requirements. The committee discussed that Comcast's agreement expired 10 years ago, and AT&T's agreement needs updating.

Brad McIlvain mentioned that Eric (the MASC attorney) had suggested including regulatory requirements in new agreements, but wanted research done on legal standing. Chairman Spencer suggested writing desired requirements into agreements and testing what survives negotiation.

The committee agreed to prioritize Berkeley first, then AT&T and Comcast, with Phil Mancusi-Ungaro leading the franchise agreement subcommittee efforts.

C. Bridge inspection recommendations status update..

Brian Gottshalk reported that the RFQ recommendations for on-call engineering services were presented to the Town Council. Once contracts are in place, they'll call for a secondary bridge inspection to verify McSweeney's initial findings that showed no pressing structural repairs needed.

"When we're talking about the only way on and off, we want to make sure it's good to go," Gottshalk stated. He explained they'll also seek recommendations for prolonging the bridge's life.

a. Near-term repairs from the last inspection report

Gottshalk indicated they're waiting for engineering contracts to be finalized before proceeding with any recommended repairs from the inspection.

b. Assessment of actions to prolong life for 20 years

Warren Stannard referenced McCormick's 2020 report showing three elevation scenarios for the Mingo Curve area, ranging from 8.6 feet to 13.6 feet depending on whether accounting for just high tide plus sea rise, adding storm surge, or including all factors.

The Committee engaged in extensive discussion about raising the road at Mingo Curve. David DeStefano distinguished between two different problems: "If you look at the high tide issue, that's an issue when the island is populated. People aren't evacuating because we had a king tide come... So what do you have to do to keep that road passable in both lanes due to a king tide at 10, 10 and a half feet?"

Russell Berner emphasized the need for cost-benefit analysis: "If you're raising it 4 feet, this is the cost, and this is what's going to happen."

Warren Stannard noted that any raising would impact wetlands requiring mitigation, and suggested the committee needs to decide how much to raise the road, considering the 20-year lifespan of asphalt pavement.

Brian Gottshalk agreed to write up a scope for engineering analysis that would include recommendations for different elevation scenarios with associated costs and impacts.

D. Assessing and modeling sea level rise at Mingo Curve update and next steps

The Committee discussed updating the sea level rise modeling done 7-8 years ago. Phillip Mancusi-Ungaro cautioned about modeling assumptions, noting that Kiawah's tide station only went in during 2020, and previous modeling used 2015-2016 data.

Brian Gottshalk noted they need to reevaluate, given that "our high tides are getting higher," and determine necessary mitigation for the parkway. The committee agreed to have engineers provide updated projections and recommendations.

E. Update on Mayor's List of Initiatives, Prioritize, and Assign Actions

This item was not discussed during the meeting.

VII. New Business:

A. Discussion on inviting Comcast/Xfinity to present at the July I&PWC

Chairman Spencer indicated he's trying to get Comcast to attend the next meeting and will follow up on the expired franchise agreement issue.

B. Consideration of a second bridge off the island

The committee engaged in extensive discussion about planning for the eventual replacement of the Kiawah River Bridge. David DeStefano framed the issue: "We're not going to wait for that bridge to fall to replace it. That's insane... It's going to get to a point where some engineer's going to go, you got another 4 or 5 years in that bridge."

He emphasized the need for macro-level planning: "You're going to have to build a bridge next to it. How does that get done? What are the permitting requirements? How much is it going to cost?"

Russell Berner clarified he supports planning for replacement, not building a redundant bridge: "In my mind, it was kind of like where Berkeley's running at 7 hours from their farms up there. You know, is that where it would go? I don't know... David's definition of a second bridge, you know, with planning for its ultimate demise, is perfect. Putting in a redundant bridge, I'm not for."

The Committee discussed whether the existing bridge could be maintained indefinitely through major repairs. Brad McIlvain suggested "you can't make that go pretty much indefinitely" by replacing structural elements over time, though others noted this would eventually become like a complete renovation.

Brian Gottshalk agreed to include long-term bridge planning considerations in the engineering scope of work.

VIII. Chairman's Updates:

Chairman Spencer had no additional updates beyond what was discussed during the meeting.

IX. Committee Members' Comments:

Warren Stannard reminded the committee about McCormick's 2020 report with detailed elevation scenarios for Mingo Curve, offering to provide copies to anyone who needs them.

The committee agreed to move the July meeting from July 3rd to July 10th at 9:00 AM due to the holiday weekend.

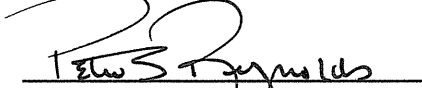
X. Citizens' Comments:

No citizens offered comments at the end of the meeting.

XI. Adjournment:

Chairman Spencer adjourned the meeting at 11:28 am, thanking everyone for their participation and hard work.

Submitted by,


Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

9.2.2025
Date