

**Town of Kiawah Island**  
**INFRASTRUCTURE & PUBLIC WORKS COMMITTEE**  
Council Chambers Meeting Room  
May 1, 2025; 10:00 am

Minutes

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

Chairman Spencer noted that participants from across the island were in attendance and asked that those present introduce themselves. He noted the importance of increased participation by island entities for collaboration and the sharing of resources on the committee's initiatives.

**Present at the Meeting:** Lance Spencer, Chairman  
David DeStefano  
Philip Mancusi-Ungaro  
John Shippee  
Warren Stannard

**Absent:** Brad McIlvain

**Also Present:** Brian Gottshalk, *Public Works Director*  
Russell Berner, *Mayor Pro Tem*  
Jody Forrest, *Kiawah Island Community Association*  
Plamen Dimitrov, *Kiawah Island Golf Resort*  
Tom Nevin, *Kiawah Partners*  
Jennifer Hays, *Kiawah ARB*

- III. **Citizens' Comments (Agenda Items Only):**

None

- IV. **Approval of Minutes:**

- A. Minutes of the Infrastructure and Public Works meeting of April 3, 2025

Chairman Spencer mentioned the absence of minutes due to technical issues.

- V. **Old Business:**

- A. Cellular and Fiber to the Home Improvements Update

Chairman Spencer stated that there had been no significant updates on home improvements, but progress is being made. Cell phone towers are owned by independent entities, not necessarily cell phone providers. Of the cellular towers on Kiawah, all except for two are Crown Castle, one is Berkeley, and one is American Tower. They work with cellular providers to deploy the infrastructure, including radios, upgrades, and buildings.

Chairman Spencer stated that members of the Committee, the Planning Commission, the Council, and staff individually met with the cellular providers, as well as Crown Castle and American Tower. As a result, Crown Castle and American Tower are working on a proposal outlining the steps necessary to enhance coverage on the island, including the introduction of 5G and the ability to access broadband capabilities over cellular infrastructure. He indicated that later in the meeting, there will be a discussion

of a recommendation from the Committee regarding zoning constraints and other community issues that need to be addressed by the Town.

Chairman Spencer stated that some of the key considerations, along with the basic connectivity to make a call, were the importance of public safety first responders to have sufficient broadband cellular coverage, both footprint and capacity, on the island for the cellular broadband tools they use and to provide an increased opportunities for choice or options of Wi-Fi providers for island residents in their homes.

Mr. Mancusi-Ungaro discussed the goal of creating full coverage for all available carriers across the entire island. Committee Members discussed the need for higher towers to achieve this goal and the challenges posed by live oaks and canopy vegetation.

### **Fiber to the Home and Telecommunications Infrastructure**

Chairman Spencer mentioned that fiber to the home was also being researched, noting the presence of fiber on the island in the new developments of Ocean Park and The Cape, noting that approximately 90 % of the island did not have fiber as an option. He explained that AT&T has the fiber infrastructure in South Carolina and carriers that need fiber leases capacity from them. Chairman Spencer indicated that there are ongoing discussions with AT&T to increase fiber-to-the-home options and will meet at the end of May.

Mr. Gottshalk introduces two videos showcasing the existing telecommunications infrastructure on the island, detailing the height, carriers, and last upgrade dates of various towers on the island. Chairman Spencer noted that most of the towers are LTE and do not offer broadband over the cellular network. Mr. Gottshalk noted that out of those seven towers, Verizon was on three of them, and AT&T and T-Mobile largely support the rest. Verizon, historically being the predominant carrier, is not very well covered on the island right now.

Committee Members engaged in an in-depth discussion of the replacement or extension of existing towers, the need for additional towers, and the challenges of navigating zoning and community constraints. It was also noted that the cellular companies and Crown Castle would be the ones making the investments in the infrastructure, and that Verizon is looking into putting a temporary cellular on wheels next to the current tower until Crown Castle comes up with a permanent solution.

### **B. Consideration of Hiring a Consultant to Explore the Purchase of Kiawah Island Utility**

Chairman Spencer stated at the last several meetings that there were discussions on hiring a consultant to explore the purchase of the Kiawah Island Utility (KIU). The Town is not planning to buy KIU but rather conducting due diligence to understand the long-term considerations of what is best for the Town and the community.

Mr. Mancusi-Ungaro discussed the memo he found on the KICA (Kiawah Island Community Association) website on the Town's potential acquisition of KIU in 2011, and that he would be reviewing the information he was just provided on the Task Force that existed in 2011—also discussing, in detail, the recent meeting with KIU to get an understanding of their facility, capabilities, and capacity, along with their business structure, the condition of other facilities owned by KIU, and future acquisitions.

Committee Members discussed Council Member Berner's question on why the Town was considering purchasing KIU, with Mr. Mancusi-Ungaro noting his takeaways from his review of the testimony that went with the application in February, noting that if a municipality runs the utility, the municipality gets to set the rates, not the Public Service Commission, and the benefit of the municipality being a

nonprofit. Along with the discussion were concerns about insurance and the liability for maintaining the utility.

**C. Discussion on Franchise Fees**

Mr. Mancusi-Ungaro presented a table of the current franchise agreements with various utility providers, including BEC (Berkeley Electric Cooperative), Comcast, and AT&T, noting that Seabrook has an agreement with BEC and that KICA has its own agreement with Comcast. The focus was on the length of agreements, how franchise and other fees were set up, how these fees are accounted for, and other aspects, including easements and rights identified in these franchise agreements.

Mr. Mancusi-Ungaro provided a high-level overview of the recently discovered KIU statewide easement agreement, noting that franchise fees for utilities can be charged at up to 5% of gross revenue, as well as the terms of the other agreements.

Chairman Spencer indicated that the information provided was helpful, noting that it was an ongoing project and would continue to be a topic of discussion for the next several months.

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

Mr. Gottshalk stated that at the start and formation of this committee, the mayor wanted the committee to consider both long-term and short-term priorities and goals. Some of the long-term goals are underway and have been discussed.

Mr. Gottshalk stated that one short-term goal was to improve portions of the leisure trail along the Parkway and Beachwalker Drive. There have been areas prone to water retention and flooding after relatively minor rain events, impacting the bike path and causing route intrusion, as well as the breaking up of the asphalt, posing hazards for bikes and pets traversing the leisure trail. The Town has contracted Proper Pavers to begin the overlay project of bringing in asphalt to pave over the low-lying areas and areas that have root intrusion. The three areas include the area along the Parkway, basically from Freshfields to Old Cedar Lane, the area right before the bridge inbound, and Beachwalker Drive from Bobcat Lane up to the intersection. The project, scheduled to begin on Monday, is expected to take four to five days and will include traffic control.

Committee Member discussion included the need for the Town Communications Department to issue advisories in its eBlasts and the practicality of having the work done at night. Also discussed was the goal of obtaining a document from KIU and other utilities that shows all the underground utility infrastructure along the Parkway and Beachwalker Drive, as well as the consideration of having an intern assist with the project.

**VI. New Business:**

**A. Recap of Meeting with Kiawah Island Utility**

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

**B. Discussion on inviting Berkeley Electric to present at Jun I&PWC**

Chairman Spencer indicated that he intended to invite Berkeley Electric Co-op as the next utility provider to meet with and would work on a letter to invite a discussion at the June meeting.

**C. Bridge inspection and recommendations**

Mr. Stannard reported his findings from a bridge inspection, highlighting the presence of cracks and the need for repairs to be completed as recommended by the consultants, also noting that the caps

covering the wood were all missing. The tops should be sealed, so they need to be replaced, along with the tops on the bike path railing, and all the wood needs to be repainted.

Committee Member discussion included the importance of sealing wood caps, the maximum load of the bridge, and addressing structural issues. Mr. DeStefano suggests there may be a need to hire another consultant for a second, more in-depth opinion and to analyze the bridge's lifespan.

Mr. Gottshalk stated that the bridge inspection report done by McSweeney Engineers noted the wood caps and some of the timber along the pedestrian portion of the bridge. However, regarding the structural aspects of the bridge itself, including the concrete, pilings, and rebar, the report stated that no immediate action is required. Instead, the findings should be monitored and another inspection conducted in accordance with federal standards within 24 months.

Following an in-depth discussion of the report findings, recommendations, and the potential cost of replacing the bridge, the committee agrees to pursue recommended repairs, analyze extending the life of the bridge, and bridge replacement, along with obtaining an independent second opinion.

**D. Vote on recommendation to Town Council and Planning Commission on zoning changes to allow improved cellular coverage**

Chairman Spencer introduces the recommendation to the Town Council and the Planning Commission to amend the Town's zoning ordinances. He stated that the rationale behind the recommendation was that one of the things that came out of the many discussions with the cell tower companies and cellular providers was the structural constraints that precluded them from providing the coverage capacity needed on the island. With zoning under the purview of the Planning Commission, a summarized recommendation on the structure issue and the utility service provider issue will be submitted to the Planning Commission, along with the Town Council, to start the more formalized consideration of what zoning changes the town might consider. As Crown Castle is working with the cell phone companies on their proposal to increase coverage, he felt that initiating a process with the Town to start doing the proper reviews and considerations for the zoning changes was a good signal to them.

***Mr. DeStefano made a motion to recommend to the Town Council and the Planning Commission to amend the Town's zoning ordinances to allow up to three 150-foot towers. Mr. Mancusi-Ungaro seconded the motion.***

Mr. Gottshalk noted that it would be important to consider adding language saying "allowing up to 150 feet," clarifying that not every tower will be 150 feet tall, because depending on the area, the tower may not need to be that tall, and the additional language covers it covers having to go through another zoning process.

***Following the discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.***

***Mr. DeStefano made a motion to amend the Town's zoning ordinances to no longer require stealth radios. Mr. Mancusi-Ungaro seconded the motion.***

Chairman Spencer stated that typically, cell towers have radios on brackets hanging off the side of the tower. The Stealth is designed to minimize its visual presence, so the radios are positioned much closer to the tower's structure and are covered. What it actually does is mitigate the signal, which may require more towers, because the strength of each tower is reduced, and the coverage capacity is also decreased. It was also mentioned that doing repairs on the antennas in the stealth towers is a nightmare.

Committee Members further discussed the challenges of maintenance and signal strength, noting that there would likely be public complaints about any solution, regardless of its perfection. Chairman Spencer expressed concerns about 911 calls and emergency services losing connectivity, stressing the need for a reliable communication infrastructure.

***Following the discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.***

Chairman Spencer stated that the presented recommendation document would be printed on letterhead and distributed to the Planning Commission and the Town Council for consideration.

**E. Franchise fees update**

This item was discussed earlier in the meeting.

**VII. Chairman's Updates:**

Chairman Spencer thanked the Committee Members for their active involvement and contributions, noting their dedication beyond just attending meetings. He also expressed appreciation for the community's and stakeholders' participation, emphasizing the collaborative spirit throughout the Town.

**VIII. Committee Members' Comments:**

Mr. DeStefano commented on the importance of keeping all parties informed and up to date to avoid surprises and ensure smooth progress. Chairman Spencer acknowledged Mr. DeStefano's comment and thanked everyone for their efforts, ensuring that all voices are heard and considered.

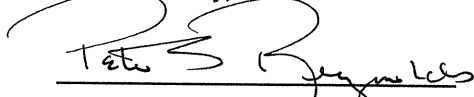
**IX. Citizens' Comments:**

None

**X. Adjournment:**

***Chairman Spencer adjourned the meeting at 11:28 am.***

**Submitted by,**



**Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk**

6/12/2025  
Date