

WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MEETING

Municipal Center Council Chambers

December 3, 2024, 10:00 am

Minutes

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

II. **Pledge of Allegiance**

III. **Roll Call:**

Present at the Meeting: Luke Farrell, *Chairman*
Brad Belt, *Mayor*
Madelene Kaye, *Committee Member*
Lance Spencer *Committee Member*

Also Present: Stephanie Tillerson, *Town Administrator*
Dorota Szubert, *Finance Director*
Brian Gottshalk, *Public Works Manager*

Chairman Farrell welcomed the newest member of the Town Council and Ways and Means Committee, Mr. Lance Spencer.

IV. **Approval of Minutes:**

A. Minutes of the Ways and Means Committee Meeting of November 5, 2024

Mayor Belt made a motion to approve the minutes of the Ways and Means Committee meeting of November 5, 2024. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion, and it was approved by a 3 to 1 vote, with Committee Member Spencer abstaining.

V. **Citizens' Comments (Agenda Items Only):**

None

VI. **Old Business:**

A. Review and Recommendation to the Town Council of the Employee Medical Insurance Premium Structure

Ms. Szubert stated that the Employee Medical Insurance Premium Structure was discussed at last month's meeting. The additional information requested was provided to the Committee Members.

Health insurance is one of the benefits that the Town provides to full-time employees. She stated that the Town Staff is asking the Committee Members to consider one of the following options:

- **No Additional Contributions:** The Town will provide no additional contributions to the employee medical insurance premium; employees and employers will be responsible for the rates provided by PEBA. (South Carolina Public Employee Benefits Authority)
- **Continue Current Structure:** Maintain the current 20/80 payment structure, in which the employee pays 20% of the full premium or the maximum PEBA rate, whichever is lower.

The employee pays 20% of the full premium, and the Town pays 80%. However, in some cases, the 20% is more than the rate dictated by PEBA, so the employee premium is capped at the PEBA rate.

- **Additional Contribution:** Approve a contribution to the employee portion of the medical insurance premium as a fixed monthly amount that will apply to all types of coverage.

The Town will have additional funding for the premiums that PEBA dictates. Staff is asking that the amount of additional funding be the cost of the insurance premium for the single employee. And that's how it was years ago, so we ask that you consider the third option.

Committee Members asked for clarification on the first and second options, discussing the rate to be paid for single and family coverage. The third option would provide a subsidy of \$133.00 for each employee, which includes vision and dental coverage.

Chairman Farrell indicated that he did not like to look at employee benefits in isolation. He preferred looking at the whole benefits package, including salary, healthcare, retirement, and vacation-paid time off, so he would be an advocate for no change until the Town did a comprehensive package.

Mayor Belt stated that Municipal employees in South Carolina have a very generous retirement benefits package that far exceeds the private sector. The Town also has generous paid time off benefits and provides a tuition benefits program along with other benefits and incentives. He felt the need to be judicious before further enhancing benefits until there is an understanding of the totality of the compensation benefits packages.

Discussion included whether there had been a staff survey to find out which of the benefits they find most valuable, the staff benefit increases in tuition reimbursement and the optional 401k contribution.

Mayor Belt stated that Council Members will receive a memo outlining and quantifying all the existing benefits provided by the Town, supplemented by an additional staff survey regarding what benefits they deem to be most valuable to them.

Mayor Belt made a motion to approve the option that maintains the status quo at this point in time. Chairman Farrell seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.

Ms. Szubert confirmed that the current 80/20 structure would be applied with the 2025 PEBA rate, and the full compensation package will be examined as part of the budget process. Mayor Belt indicated that overall employee recruitment and retention strategies could be part of the January strategic planning meetings.

B. Review and Recommendation to the Town Council to enter into an Engagement Agreement with Maynard Nexsen for legal services pertaining to the Kiawah Island Golf Resort Development Agreement

Mayor Belt stated that this item was on the last Ways and Means and Council agendas and was deferred because Council Member Berner had raised some questions about the procedure for considering a sole-sourced agreement. He requested additional information or documentation of the bona fides of the individual and the firm. That information has been provided to Council Members.

As an update, Mayor Belt stated that following additional discussions with the attorney and the firm, he was able to negotiate an additional 20% reduction in the rates specified in the draft agreement. He also noted that counsel indicated that it is customary for municipalities to seek and obtain reimbursement for consulting fees, including attorneys' fees, in conjunction with drafting and negotiating development agreements. Also, pointing out that other government entities have a sizable application fee for development agreements, which currently is not part of the Town's ordinance.

Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the retention of George Bullwinkle and the firm Maynard Nexon to provide specialized legal services with regard to the drafting and negotiation of any development agreement with the Resort. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion.

Mayor Belt reviewed the process, beginning with the administration meeting with the Resort to discuss the potential framework for a development agreement and identify any potential issues and changes that might want to be made. Any application submitted would first go to the Planning Commission for review, and then the Planning Commission would make a recommendation to the Town Council for final approval.

Committee Member Kaye suggested that it may be beneficial to have a member of the Planning Commission involved in the first steps. Committee Members engaged in an in-depth discussion of the development agreement process and the Planning Commission’s role throughout the process.

Following the discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

VII. New Business:

A. Review and Recommendation to the Town Council of the FY 2024-2025 November SATAX Funding Recommendations

Ms. Szubert stated the first SATAX meeting to recommend funding for FY 2024-2025 was held in April. With an additional one million dollars available for funding, a second round of seven applications totaling \$600,000 was considered at the November meeting. The SATAX Committee made the following recommendations:

SATAX Committee Funding Recommendations November FY 2024/2025			
Project	Applicant Sponsor	2024/2025 November Application Request	SATAX Committee Funding Recommendation
Destination Marketing & Advertising	Andell Inn	\$ 120,000.00	67,000
Enhanced Video Equipment	Barrier Island Ocean Rescue	\$ 78,785.42	78,154
Freshfields Village + Garden & Gun / Event Partnership	Freshfields Village / Freshfields (EDENS) LLC	\$ 25,128.00	25,128
Marketing of KI Events and Holiday Programing	Kiawah Island Golf Resort	\$ 200,000.00	192,000
Continued Outreach with the Dolphin Education Program	Lowcountry Marine Mammal Network	\$ 1,500.00	1,500
Channel Realgnment at the East End of Kiawah Island	Town of Kiawah Island	\$ 77,000.00	77,000
Leisure Trail Improvements	Town of Kiawah Island	\$ 70,000.00	70,000
Traffic Monitoring	Town of Kiawah Island	\$ 26,195.00	25,163
	Totals for Year Ending	\$ 598,608	\$ 535,945
Total Available for Funding		\$ 1,000,000	\$ 1,000,000
Total in excess of Funding		\$ 401,392	\$ (464,055)

Chairman Farrell stated that at the meeting, there were discussions on the philosophy of contributing to marketing budgets, expanding the wildlife effort for signage, even going further for the dolphins at the far end of Captain Sam Spit, and using SATAX money for drones or capital equipment.

Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the FY 2024-2025 November SATAX funding recommendations. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion.

Mayor Belt stated that outreach was needed to expand applicants for tourism-related expenditures. Also discussed was the allowed use of SATAX funds for the promotion of arts and cultural events and the allowed use of funds for a beach renourishment program.

Following the discussion, the motion was unanimously approved.

B. Review and Recommendation to the Town Council of the Proposal for Comprehensive Landscape Maintenance and Related Services

Mr. Gottshalk stated that the Town uses a third-party contractor to provide landscape services for all town-owned trees, shrubs, and landscape beds along the Kiawah Island Parkway, Beachwalker Drive, and at the Municipal Center. The Town currently uses Artigues Landscape Maintenance to perform these services, and they have been our landscape service provider since January 1st 2022. They were awarded a 3-year contract, which will terminate at the end of this year. Since this contract is terminating, Town staff released an RFP for Landscape Service and Maintenance firms to provide bids for this contract.

Town staff released an RFP to solicit bids for Landscape Maintenance Services. The RFP was posted publicly for two weeks, and town staff received seven bids. The results are as follows:

Artigues Landscape and Maintenance:	\$189,996.00 Annually
LandOne Group, LLC:	\$190,928.75 Annually
Pleasant Places:	\$156,920.00 Annually
Russell Landscape Group:	\$225,901.06 Annually
Ruppert Landscape:	\$183,120.00 Annually
The Greenery, Inc:	\$188,040.00 Annually
Yellowstone Landscape:	\$256,030.00 Annually

A team of five review members carefully reviewed all of these bids for the price, maintenance schedule, mulch and pine straw applications, and regular reporting on the irrigation system. After reviewing all of the bids and subsequent discussions, the Town staff will recommend to the Ways and Means Committee that we award this contract to Artigues Landscape Maintenance for a total of \$189,996.00 annually for landscape services described in their proposal. If approved, this contract will be funded 70% through restricted funds and 30% through the General Fund.

Committee Member Kaye made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the proposal from Artigues for Landscape Maintenance Services. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion.

The contract term is debated, preferring to be less than three years due to past inconsistencies.

Mayor Belt noted past communication issues with the incumbent service provider and continued concerns about adherence to the contract terms, led to the decision to release a new RFP.

Questions were raised about the evaluation criteria, which included price, electric equipment plan, and references. Concerns were raised about the scoring process, particularly regarding the lowest bidder's incomplete proposal, which did not address the RFP requirement for electric leaf blowers and a transition plan.

Committee Members engaged in an in-depth discussion of each proposal's response to the electric equipment plan, evaluation criteria, renegotiating with bidders for better compliance, and inconsistencies in the evaluation team's scoring.

Chairman Farrell made a motion to table a proposal recommendation to the Town Council. Mayor Belt seconded the motion, adding that the Council should sit down within the next week or so and review all of the materials to understand an apples-to-apples comparison on price, electrical, and recommendations or service experience. The motion was unanimously approved.

VIII. Chairman's Report:

Deferred until after the Treasurer's Report

IX. Treasurer's Report:

A. Review the Town's Reserves investment in LGIP (Local Government Investment Pool) and Other Alternatives

Ms. Szubert began the discussion on evaluating investment management and the Town's approach to selecting the best investment strategy, addressing concerns about the state treasurer's office's stability and whether there were better investment options.

With 25 years in bond investment management, Ms. Szubert assessed current practices and alternatives. The fiduciary responsibility to evaluate risk profiles and return opportunities was emphasized. The Town holds \$38.5 million in reserves. Reserves include \$90 million in the general fund, \$8 million in the capital fund, \$2.5 million in the emergency fund, and \$10 million in the tourism fund. The funds are not tied to specific cash flow streams. A reserve study is planned to determine the minimum necessary balance, ensuring financial health.

An Investment Committee led by Chairman Farrell focused on safety, liquidity, and yield.

- Evaluate the needs of the Town
- Determine an investment horizon
- Consider market risks and return opportunities
- Solicit Marketplace Expertise (RFP)

An RFP yielded 12 responses from firms with varying sizes and fees. Evaluation criteria included:

- Return on benchmarks
- Assets under management of firms
- Number of accounts managed
- Experience in fixed income
- Average Fees

Ms. Szubert stated that the allowed instruments include U.S. Treasury Bills, Federal Agency Securities, Certificates of Deposits, Municipal Bonds, Money Market Securities and Funds. Equities, Corporate Bonds Derivatives and Speculative Instruments, Emerging Market Debt, High Yield Bonds, Uninsured or Unsecured Deposits, and Non-USD Currencies are prohibited.

Given the municipality's strong balance sheet and excess reserves, the principal aim is to protect the principal. Current investments are in the South Carolina Local Government Investment Pool. The South Carolina treasurer's initiative enables local governments to pool funds. As of June 30, 2024, the pool held 14 billion dollars, with 1,000 accounts and 300 participants. This governmental entity follows guidelines for capital preservation, liquidity, and returns.

Chairman Farrell highlighted the portfolio's performance, focusing on the Weighted Average Life (WAL) and Weighted Average Maturity (WAM) as short-term, low-risk cash investments. These investments, measured in days, offer low interest rate risk and high quality, ensuring low credit risk. WAL and WAM are crucial for liquidity and risk management. The initiative's goals are capital preservation, liquidity, and reasonable returns, with WAL and WAM ensuring low risk and high quality.

The meeting discusses the \$14 billion Local Government Investment Pool (LGIP), managed by Federated Investments and administered by South Carolina. This fund, distinct from state retirement systems, emphasizes high credit quality and low credit and interest rate risk, focusing on safety, security, capital preservation, and liquidity. It consistently outperforms the Bloomberg Barclays short government benchmark.

The recommendation is to maintain the current strategy, as it meets investment needs. The fund's low management cost of two to three basis points is highlighted, and the decision against locking in longer-term rates due to a potential yield loss of 80 basis points is addressed, given the current yield of about 5%.

B. Monthly Budget Report

Ms. Szubert presented the Town's Budget to Actual Report for the first 4 months. The Budget to Actual Report is compiled on a modified accrual basis, and all the funds are consolidated.

Overall, for the first four months, the Town's consolidated revenues of \$5.8 million are 6%, or \$355,000 higher, when compared to YTD for the last fiscal year, FY2024, and represent 38% of the total budget. Revenues are in line with expectations, with the following exceptions showing positive variance:

1. Business License Revenue: Increased by \$232,000, or 90%. In the first four months the Town issued 488 business licenses, which is 240 more when compared to last year.
2. Environmental Service Fees: An increase in garbage collection fees

This positive variance is offset by a negative variance in Building Permit Revenue related to the issuance of a one-time permit for Lower/Upper Beachwalker in the previous year.

At the end of October 2024, the expenditures of \$4.1 million are 13% or 460K higher than for fiscal year FY204 and 29% of the current year budget. They are in line with the budget, and the majority of the operating expenses are comparable to last year's totals, with the exception of the following:

1. Public Safety/Off Duty Deputies: Increased by \$191,000, or 286%, primarily due to an increase in hourly pay to \$55.00, approved in February 2024, and a rise in coverage, with hours worked increasing to 3,181 compared to 2,435 hours during the same period last year.
2. Waste Management: Increased by \$267,000, or 61%, driven by higher contract costs for garbage collection

X. Citizens' Comments:

None

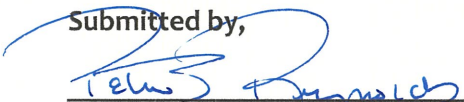
XI. Committee Member's Comments:

None

XII. Adjournment:

Chairman Farrell adjourned the meeting at 11:58 am.

Submitted by,


Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

1-13-2025

Date