

# WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MEETING

Municipal Center Council Chambers

March 4, 2025, 9:00 am

## Minutes

I. **Call to Order:** *Chairman Farrell called the meeting to order at 9:00 am.*

II. **Pledge of Allegiance**

III. **Roll Call:**

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

**Also Present:** Russell Berner, *Mayor Pro Tem*  
Madelene Kaye, *Council Member*  
Stephanie Tillerson, *Town Administrator*  
Dorota Szubert, *Finance Director*  
Daniel Vincent, *Planner 1*  
Jule Staradumsky, *Receptionist/Finance Assistant*  
Patrea St. John, *Planner 1, Tree Preservation Specialist*  
Caroline Wall, *Arts and Cultural Events Manager*  
Petra Reynolds, *Town Clerk*

IV. **Approval of Minutes:**

A. Minutes of the Ways and Means Committee Meeting of February 4, 2025

Chairman Farrell inquired whether there were any edits or additions to the Ways and Means Committee meeting minutes held on February 4, 2025. No edits or additions were made, so the minutes were approved as presented.

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

None

VI. **Old Business:**

None

VII. **New Business:**

A. Review and Recommendation to the Town Council for the Approval of the Fiscal Year 2024/2025 Charitable Grants Funding Amounts

Chairman Farrell stated that the next order of business was to review and recommend approval of the Charitable Grant funding amounts for the Fiscal Year 2024-2025.

Ms. Reynolds introduced the staff members who met with each of the applicants. There were 19 applications requesting a total of \$260,000 in funding. With a budget of \$200,000, which required \$60,000 in reductions, the staff proposed allocating \$199,024, as outlined in the presentation.

Ms. Walls reviewed the following:

- *AMOR Healing Kitchen* requested \$7,440 to cover 12 weeks of the raw food costs and delivery of plant-based nutritious meals free of charge to Sea Island clients in need. Staff recommended full funding.

- *Backpack Buddies of Seabrook* requested \$5,000 for food purchases to provide weekly food deliveries to over 350 students at Johns Island schools, ensuring students in need are fed over the weekend. Staff recommended full funding.
- *Barrier Islands Free Medical Clinic* offers comprehensive healthcare services to uninsured adults and requested \$30,000 to purchase necessary medical supplies and equipment to support its expanded healthcare initiative. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$25,000.
- *Camp Hi Hope* enrolls 30 children from Title I schools in a six-week summer program to mitigate the summer learning loss and requested \$10,000 for field trips and transportation. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$7,000.
- *Charleston Area Senior Citizens* runs the local Meals on Wheels program and requested \$22,369 for raw food costs to provide daily meals and wellness checks to their 53 seniors on Johns Island. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$15,000.
- *Charleston Area Therapeutic Riding* provides a unique learning experience for special education students and requested \$7,084 to fund the participation of a special education classroom from Johns Island. Staff recommended full funding.
- *Kiawah Women's Foundation* requested \$15,000 to provide weekly food and nutritional support to 350 children at risk of hunger on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$12,000.

Mr. Vincent reviewed the following:

- *Low Country Food Bank* provides fresh produce, meat, dairy, and shelf-stable items to those in need and requested \$15,520 to purchase nutritious food and fresh produce for distribution at local food pantries on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$12,000.
- *The New Webster JIP Food Pantry* requested \$ 8,000 to provide essential food assistance twice a month, distributing bags filled with fresh and nonperishable items directly to 123 local households. Staff recommended full funding.
- *Operation Home* helps low-income families remain in their homes by providing critical home repairs and wheelchair ramps and distributing heaters and air conditioners. They requested \$10,000 to support up to 50 families on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands. Staff recommended full funding.

Ms. Staradumsky reviewed the following:

- *Our Lady of Mercy* provides dental and women's clinic services, a food pantry, a clothing closet, home repairs, and educational classes. The requested \$30,000 is specifically for the dental program, which provides free dental care to those who can't afford it. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$14,000.
- *The Paraclete Foundation of Holy Spirit Catholic Church* requested \$15,000 to assist the elderly, disabled, and low-income individuals in need by providing essential home repairs on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands. \$12,000 for home repairs. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$12,000.
- *Sea Island Blessing Basket*, a vital community outreach program, requested \$25,000 to provide much-needed monthly food assistance to approximately 600 residents of Johns and Wadmalaw Islands living below the poverty level. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$20,000.

Ms. St John reviewed the following:

- *Sea Island Habitat for Humanity* requested \$20,000 for the construction of a house for a single mother who is currently a John's Island resident. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$18,000.
- *St. James Bethel AME Church* requested \$6,000 for food purchases for its food pantry program, which provides grocery distributions every second and fourth Wednesday of the month and supports 110 households annually. Staff recommended full funding.
- *Sweet Grass Garden Co-Op*, a nonprofit farm that provides free, fresh, naturally grown local produce to charitable food district distribution agencies, requested \$3000 to cover the cost of sowing seeds and fruit

and nut trees, which will extend their produce year-round. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$2,500.

- *Feeding the Multitude*, a group of partnering churches, requested \$7,000 to provide food distribution to people in need at Thanksgiving, supporting approximately 6,600 people annually on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$4,000.
- Third Serve Foundation requested 13,600 for its Fit to Serve program, which seeks to enhance the physical, mental, and social well-being of underserved youth on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$6,000.
- Vision to Learn, a national nonprofit with an office in Charleston, requested \$10,000 to provide access to vision screenings, eye exams, and new prescription glasses directly to kindergarten through 12th-grade students in high-need and underserved communities at no cost to the students or their families. Staff recommended a partial funding amount of \$8,000.

Before discussing each application, Committee Members reviewed how the recommendation amounts were determined, noting that some were fully funded while others had more than a 50% reduction. Ms. Reynolds stated that \$60,000 in reductions needed to be made; the staff used a merit-based approach rather than an across-the-board reduction, which would have been unfair to some applicants.

Council Member Kaye stated that she suspected staff spent considerable time on each of these applications, examining what had been done in the past and what was projected to be done in the future. Questions should be raised about the individual grant, and taking an across-the-board approach would minimize the work already done by staff.

Mayor Belt commended the staff's hard work, not only in compiling the materials but also in the time they spent on site visiting each of the applicants. He expressed concerns about organizations that appeared to have a very high proportion of their revenues devoted to salaries, expenses, and administration rather than program benefits. He also had concerns that while some applications clearly fit within the established guidelines, others were a bit of a stretch; he suggested revising the guidelines in the future.

Chairman Farrell stated that, upon reviewing the list of applications, he prioritized food, followed by shelter, and then medical and enrichment, food and shelter being the two most important. He also noted that ten organizations provided food and asked if they had considered joining forces or coordinating their efforts.

***Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$7,440 to Amor Healing Kitchen. Mayor Pro Tem Berner seconded the motion.***

The discussion raised concerns about the allocation of budgeted revenues to administration rather than program expenses. A representative of Amor explained the salaries for a full-time chef and culinary manager, noting that the tasks they perform, such as coordinating the teens and the 55 volunteers, are more part of our program than they are administrative. The representative also noted in-kind contributions. Also clarified was that the grant application is program-specific to clients on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands.

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

***Mayor Pro Tem Berner made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$5,000 to Backpack Buddies of Seabrook. Mayor Belt seconded the motion.***

The discussion included whether there was any program overlap with other Backpack Buddies. Ms. Willhoft of the Kiawah Women's Foundation stated that the programs are separated by the schools

they serve, as each organization serves different schools. Mr. Snyder added that the Kiawah Women's Foundation does more than Backpack Buddies. In contrast, Backpack Buddies of Seabrook specifically focused on providing food to 252 children in the schools it serves on Johns Island.

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

***Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$20,000 to Barrier Island Free Medical Clinic. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion.***

Mayor Belt indicated that Barrier Island Free Medical Clinic (BIFMC) is now providing services to the Tri-County; he asked for clarification on whether the funding request is utilized across the three counties or is specific to the clinic and services provided on Johns Island. Ms. Frank, the BIFMC Executive Director, stated that 65% of patients currently reside on Johns Island, and approximately 4% reside on Wadmalaw Island.

Responding to the rationale for the decrease in funding, Ms. Wall stated that in the proposed use of the funds, BIFMC had allocated \$5,000 for marketing, which doesn't fit the criteria.

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

***Mayor Pro Tem Berner made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$7,000 to Camp Hi Hope. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion.***

The discussion included the supportability of the application and its alignment with the three criteria but rather falling under the enrichment category mentioned by Chairman Farrell. Mayor Pro Tem Berner suggested there was a need to include education/enrichment in the criteria list.

Ms. Wall pointed out that while attending the summer camp, the children are provided with two to three meals a day, serving a dual purpose, as it also offers affordable childcare. She also noted that the funding reduction was determined by examining the use of the last grant awarded. Camp Hi Hope was able to complete its transportation and field trips with approximately \$7,000 and may be able to maintain that program with a similar amount to what it spent last year.

It was also clarified that there were no elements of proselytizing in the program; the church provided the building for them to host the camp, and the salary expenses covered the personnel delivering the program. Everyone else was a volunteer.

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

***Mayor Pro Tem Berner made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$15,000 to Charleston Area Senior Citizens. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion.***

Council Member Kaye requested an explanation for the funding reduction. Ms. Wall stated that the deduction was simply a budgetary consideration due to the \$60,000 that had to be cut. Noting that the cost to deliver on John's Island is approximately \$8 per meal, we attempted to allocate as much as possible within the \$15,000 budget.

It was also clarified that Meals on Wheels was a program facilitated by Charleston Area Senior Citizens. Ms. Cook, the Executive Director, stated that the program served 50 to 60 meals to the Johns and Wadmalaw Islands, and the request was for a portion of the raw food costs for those meals only.

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

**Mayor Pro Tem Berner made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$7,084 to Charleston Area Therapeutic Riding. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion.**

The discussion included concerns about whether the Charleston Area Therapeutic Riding (CATR) met the three criteria but rather fell under the category of enrichment. Given that a significant portion of the costs is allocated to staffing, whether for administrative staff or programmatic staff, was also a consideration. Ms. Ryan, CATR Director, explained the certifications held by the instructors and the educational outreach programs, noting that the salaries are allocated toward these programs. The request is for funding the public school program at St. Johns HS and Mt. Zion.

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

**Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$12,000 to the Kiawah Women's Foundation. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion.**

Ms. Wall asked the Committee to consider that, similar to Backpack Buddies of Seabrook, the Kiawah Women's Foundation serves a very similar number of clients with significantly different budgets. Ms. Wall explained that one of the expenses is the cost of renting space to house and pack the food, as well as maintaining the website. The foundation has an all-volunteer workforce that packs and delivers to students identified by school staff and under the poverty level in four Johns and Wadmalaw Islands schools.

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

**Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$12,000 to the Low Country Food Bank. Mayor Pro Tem Berner seconded the motion.**

The discussion included concerns about the request for funds to purchase food for distribution to people in need at the Low Country Food Bank, while other nonprofits are having to purchase food from the same source.

Ms. Salvo of Sea Island Blessing Basket stated that some of the food is given away for free. At the same time, other items are purchased to support their organization at prices that are usually very reasonable compared to those at the grocery store.

Mr. Brown, the director of agency relations at the Low Country Food Bank, stated that the request would help cover the cost of purchasing produce for two large distributions, which are free of charge to partner agencies. Additionally, agency support is provided through shopping credits on their accounts and assistance in obtaining the best price point for the items that need to be purchased. Also discussed were the partner agencies on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands, as well as the federal programs that provide food to the agencies at no cost and grants for food purchases.

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

**Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$10,000 to Operation Home. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion.**

Chairman Farrell requested clarification on whether the funding request pertains to the Johns and Wadmalaw Islands or the Tri-County area. Ms. Langley, Executive Director of Operation Home, stated that the funds are designated directly to nine families on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands and are used immediately. Further discussion included Operation Home's sole mission to help families remain in their homes by providing critical home repairs rather than building homes from the ground up.

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

***Council Member Kaye made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$14,000 to Our Lady of Mercy. Mayor Pro Tem Berner seconded the motion.***

Mayor Belt requested an explanation of why the staff recommended a substantially lower amount than was requested. Mr. Vincent stated that it was noted during the group discussion that a large portion of their \$30,000 request was being allocated directly to the doctors who provide the dental care. Ms. D'Amato, CFO of Our Lady of Mercy, clarified that the dental program must have a licensed dentist, staff, and volunteer student dentists. The funding request for the dental program aims to cover the expenses for all the necessary denture equipment required to provide the dentures. Also discussed was that only approximately 10% of the budget was allocated to programs and that an average of 150 to 200 residents from Johns and Wadmalaw received free oral care through the program.

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

***Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$12,000 to the Paraclete Foundation of the Holy Spirit Catholic Church. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion.***

Mayor Belt noted that the application from the Paraclete Foundation was thorough and well-prepared, remarking that the foundation, remarkably, incurs no administrative costs or salaries, and all the work is being done on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands.

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

***Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$20,000 to the Sea Island Blessing Basket. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion.***

Mayor Belted noted that the Sea Island Blessing Basket application indicated very low administrative costs, with 98% of all donations going directly to feeding those in need. Ms. Salvo explained the collaborative efforts of the twelve partners under the Sea Island Hunger Awareness Foundation, which provides food and various services related to food on Wadmalaw and Johns Islands, noting that the Sea Island Blessing Basket is one of the three independently funded programs of the foundation. The group meets monthly to discuss ways to support one another and improve their programs. It was also noted that the Sea Island Blessing Basket serves almost 300 people in a single day every month, and the request is to fund two months of purchases.

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

***Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$18,000 to the Sea Island Habitat for Humanity. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion.***

Mr. Sean, Executive Director of Habitat, stated that the funding request is intended to help cover the cost of constructing a single new house.

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

***Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$6,000 to St. James Bethel AME Church. Mayor Pro Tem Berner seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.***

**Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$2,500 to Sweet Grass Garden Co-Op. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion.**

The discussion included confirmation that all food grown is donated to emergency food kitchens on Johns Island, along with an explanation of the estimated 50% increase in their capacity to serve.

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

**Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$4,000 to The Feeding the Multitude. Mayor Pro Tem Berner seconded the motion.**

The discussion included the rationale for the funding decrease. Ms. St. John stated that their budget showed annual operating expenses of \$25,000 and a \$12,000 carryover, leaving money available. Given the carryover from last year, the group felt comfortable making a decrease.

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

**Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$6,000 to the Third Serve Foundation. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion.**

The discussion included the fact that the application previously submitted by the Third Serve Foundation was not funded because it was deemed not to meet the criteria. However, it is an enrichment program, differing from the STEM and therapeutic riding programs.

Ms. St. John stated that the staff felt the wellness program, which included workshops to educate children about health and nutrition, fit within the guidelines. Two of the three workshops were community, so the staff elected to fund the one solely for the children budgeted at \$6,000.

Ms. Grogan, the Assistant Director of the First Serve Foundation, stated that the tennis program aims to reach a silent generation of kids who have little parental guidance and are unaware of access to free medical clinics, food banks, and other support networks. A significant goal of these health and wellness workshops is to provide education to 50 children from Frierson and Haut Gap about the various resources available to them. The program includes meals and transportation services from the schools. It was also noted that children attend school on tennis day because they want to participate in the tennis program.

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

**Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council the approval of the staff's recommendation to allocate \$8,000 to Vision to Learn. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion.**

Mr. Blackford with Vision to Learn confirmed that the mobile vision clinic program serves all the Title-1 schools on Johns Island and will include St. Johns High School this year. The program provides screens and glasses to students at no charge to the students or their families.

The discussion included that the Vision to Learn program serves the Tri-County area, raising concerns about how the approved funding would be earmarked for the Title I schools on Johns and Wadmalaw Islands. Chairman Farrell noted that by his calculations, 20% of the total eye screenings were done on Johns Island and would fall within the guidelines' scope.

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

## **B. Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Discussion**

Mayor Belt stated that, according to the Town ordinance, it is the Mayor's obligation to present a budget for Council consideration. Although no action is being taken at this meeting, it is a discussion item for the Ways and Means Committee. He thanked Ms. Szubert and Ms. Tillerson for the extraordinary amount of time they spent reviewing the budget line by line, making significant changes, tweaks, and adjustments along the way.

### **Budget Discussion and Revenue and Expenditure Trends**

- Mayor Belt provided an overview of the budget, noting that the Town is fortunate to generate a diverse set of revenues that significantly exceed ordinary operating and non-recurring expenditures, creating a substantial revenue surplus.
- The discussion included the operating budget or the cost of running the government, with Mayor Belt emphasizing the need to ensure revenue streams exceed the operating expenses. The General Fund, Capital Fund, and Beach Renourishment Fund were also reviewed, along with an overview of accommodations tax revenues, restrictions, and allowable allocations to capital projects.
- There was an in-depth discussion of consulting fees and the possibility of setting up an on-call engineering services contract for services associated with larger Town projects or surveying for planning and zoning.
- Ms. Szubert explained the budget details, noting the draft projected a 2.6 million surplus and that all funds, with the exception of the State Accommodation Tax Fund, were projected to have a surplus. Also discussed were concerns about the potential for some revenue sources to decline over time, as well as the importance of managing recurring and non-recurring expenses.
- Mayor Pro Tem Berner raised concerns about the trend of increasing salaries and benefits, noting the need to balance revenue and expenditure growth. The discussion highlighted the importance of managing compensation costs and assessing the potential need for additional staff and off-duty deputy services.

### **Future Planning and Capital Projects**

- The discussion included budgeting for potential large expenditures and funding of capital projects, including the construction of a new wing and the repaving of Kiawah Island Parkway.
- Mayor Belt explained that an allocation could be made from the general fund or other options, such as issuing bonds or utilizing accommodations tax funds, engaging in an in-depth discussion of the Accommodations Tax revenues, and permitting expenditures such as beach renourishment. Chairman Farrell emphasized the importance of continuing to explore ways to allocate more funds from the operating budget to the hospitality tax.
- Mayor Belt discussed communities like Isle of Palms and Folly Beach, which are more liberal in their use of accommodations tax funds, emphasizing the need to maximize expenditures from the State Accommodations Tax.

### **Five-Year Capital Plan and Future Projects**

- Mayor Belt noted the projected \$2.5 million surplus was inclusive of contingencies for projected higher consultant costs, a \$200,000 pledge to MUSC, and two \$300,000 line items for potential expenses for building, infrastructure, landscape, and potential office space conversion projects.
- Ms. Szubert encouraged the members to review the five-year capital plan she distributed, which includes a list of potential projects.

- Further discussion included using State Accommodations Tax funds for patching or repaving Beachwalker Drive and potential projects like leisure trail/sidewalk connectivity and the Betsy Kerrison Parkway safety enhancement project. Mayor Belt also mentioned the need to reassess the potential purchase of the Kiawah Island utility, which was considered a decade ago but not pursued.
- Mayor Belt discussed a proposal from the Kiawah Conservancy for an expanded living shoreline project around the Kiawah Island Bridge. He stated that funding could be allocated from the monies set aside for conservation-related initiatives. Rather than being funded by the Town, he encouraged the Conservancy to submit its proposal to the State Accommodations Tax Committee for funding.

**VIII. Chairman’s Report:**

None

**IX. Treasurer’s Report:**

**A. Monthly Budget Report**

Ms. Szubert stated that, in the Monthly Budget Report, revenues are within budget. As reported earlier, business licenses and building permits are likely to exceed the budget, while expenditures are in line with budgeted amounts.

**X. Citizens’ Comments:**

None

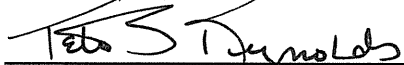
**XI. Committee Member’s Comments:**

None

**XII. Adjournment:**

*Chairman Farrell adjourned the meeting at 12:26 pm.*

Submitted by,

  
 Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

4-2-2025  
 Date