

**WAYS & MEANS COMMITTEE MEETING**  
**Municipal Center Council Chambers**  
**January 6, 2026, 10:00 am**

Minutes

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

**II. Roll Call:**

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

**Also Present:** Stephanie Tillerson, *Town Administrator*  
Dorota Szubert, *Finance Director*  
John Taylor, Jr., *Planning Director*

**III. Approval of Minutes:**

**A. Minutes of the Ways and Means Committee Meeting of December 2, 2025**

Chairman Farrell inquired whether there were any edits or additions to the December 2<sup>nd</sup> Ways and Means Committee meeting minutes. Mayor Belt noted that he had given the clerk a few clarifications and typographical edits. Chairman Farrell mentioned he had a couple of edits to send as well.

Chairman Farrell stated that with those corrections, the minutes were approved.

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

No citizens' comments were received on agenda items.

**V. Old Business:**

None

Chairman Farrell announced he would like to change the order of the new business items, explaining that he felt it made sense to do the monthly budget report before the mid-fiscal year review. He asked if everyone was agreeable to this change.

**VI. New Business:**

**A. Review and Recommendation to the Town Council of the Amendment to the Planning Fee Schedule for the Design Review Board**

Mr. Taylor presented proposed amendments to the planning fee schedule that would establish fees for the newly created Design Review Board. The proposed schedule includes different fee categories for single-family, multi-family, and commercial projects, with costs escalating based on the scope and scale of each use type.

Mr. Taylor further explained that staff developed the recommendations by examining comparable communities and considering the overall cost of the permitting process. He provided an example of a 20,000-square-foot commercial building, which would incur approximately \$2,000 in total planning and zoning fees, including \$500 for site plan review, \$1,500 for Design Review Board approval, and \$100 for the zoning permit.

Mayor Belt noted that he had previously discussed the purpose of these fees with the Planning Director, acknowledging that they do not generate significant revenue or cover the full costs of the

review process. However, he confirmed that the proposed fees were consistent with those of other municipalities with statutory design review boards.

Mayor Belt noted the elimination of Landscape and Tree Preservation Board fees from the presented fee schedule and questioned whether this was premature, since the board had not yet been dissolved, though it was anticipated to be combined with the Design Review Board.

Mr. Taylor stated that, rather than having to come back for another approval, the dissolution of the Landscape and Tree Preservation Board would also dissolve these fees. He also noted that the Planning Commission was scheduled to consider an amendment to the zoning code the following day that would eliminate the Tree Preservation Board from the ordinance, with the matter likely to come before the Town Council in February.

Committee Members discussed the timing and procedural approach, including Mayor Belt's proposed amendment to add a footnote to the fee schedule stating that those fees would be deleted or removed upon the dissolution of the Tree Preservation Board. After further discussion, Mayor Belt withdrew the amendment and suggested accepting the staff recommendations as proposed.

***Mayor Belt made a motion to recommend to the Town Council to approve the proposed modifications to the Planning Fee Schedule as presented. Committee Member Spencer seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.***

## **B. Mid-Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Review**

### **Monthly Budget Report**

Ms. Szubert presented the Town's Budget-to-Actual Report for the first five months of the fiscal year, noting that the Budget-to-Actual Report is compiled on a cash basis, and all funds are consolidated.

Overall, for the first five months, the Town's consolidated revenues totaled \$7.6 million, an increase of \$703,000, or 10%, compared to the same period in FY2025. This amount represents 43% of the total budgeted revenues for the current year. Revenues are performing in line with expectations. Business License revenue and Building Permits show positive variances compared to the prior year and are anticipated to remain above budget for the remainder of the fiscal year.

At 42% of the fiscal year elapsed, total expenditures stand at \$4.7 million, which is \$133,000, or 3% higher than the same period in FY2025. This amount represents 31% of the current year's budget. Overall, expenditures remain consistent with both the approved budget and prior year spending patterns.

### **Mid-Year Budget Review**

After evaluating current-year expenditures and comparing them with the original budget estimates, the staff has identified several potential savings.

Ms. Szubert reviewed the identified potential savings:

- Personnel costs; **Salaries & Benefits** - approximately \$130,000-140,000 under budget, including \$75,000 for an unfilled Resiliency Officer position and \$33,000 from budgeted salary adjustments

Mayor Belt indicated he expected future staffing-related issues or needs would be discussed at the strategic planning meeting later in the month. He then outlined several staffing considerations, including the Chief Resiliency Officer position, facility management needs for the new wing upon completion, and contract discussions regarding community service and code enforcement responsibilities with Barrier Island Ocean Rescue.

- **Administration and Operations** – approximately \$270,000 under budget, mostly related to:

- \$35,000 savings in Town-organized events outside of Arts Council programming. (budgeted \$50,000, spent \$11,000 to date)
- Approximately \$100,000 savings in **Maintenance Costs** resulting from lower landscaping contract costs and reduced scope for planned enhancements. (lower than the lowest bidder estimate)
- \$100,000 projected savings in **Professional Services**, primarily due to reduced legal service costs. (spent \$150,000 to date of \$504,000 budgeted, plus \$80,000 in prepaid legal from insurance)
- \$33,000 savings in **Travel and Training**, due to reduced travel activity.

Mayor Belt expressed surprise about the legal services projection. He mentioned pending issues, including Captain Sams Spit litigation, franchise-related issues, Seabrook Island utility, and development agreements, among others. He noted that they could be significant expenditures but would still be projected to remain below budget. Ms. Szubert added an explanation of the optional prepaid legal insurance purchased by the Town that will reimburse \$80,000 in legal fees for the three cases last year and the one case already in progress this year.

- **Consulting Services** - projected to be \$156,000 lower than the budget. These savings result from certain projects being deferred to the next fiscal year or completed at lower-than-budgeted costs, including the zoning ordinance update, stormwater management review, and GIS shapefile mapping.
- **Public Safety Resources** - projected to be \$608,000 lower than budget, primarily due to reduced deputy coverage, adjusted eight-hour shifts for 3 to 4 days per week.

Mayor Belt provided context about the evolving relationship with the Charleston County Sheriff's Office. The previous contract for 24/7 coverage with two deputies was terminated, and the new sheriff implemented a different structure with higher hourly rates (\$75/hour versus the previous \$55/hour). The Town has shifted to a more limited approach, using deputies for specific shifts rather than continuous coverage, resulting in significant savings.

- **Charitable Contributions** - projected to be \$50,000 higher than the budget, reflecting an increase approved last month by the Town Council.
- A contingency of \$100,000 in the budget, which is not expected to be needed given the projected savings.
- **Capital Outlay** - projected to be \$216,000 lower than the budget. This net reduction reflects:
  - \$93,000 increase in Building-Related costs to cover architectural costs associated with the design of the new building wing.
  - \$300,000 lower cost for **Infrastructure and Landscape** projects due to the deferral of patching work on Beachwalker Drive and Kiawah Island Parkway until after completion of the Ocean Pines construction project, and Betsy Kerrison enhancements not anticipated to happen this fiscal year.

Ms. Szubert concluded by stating that overall, expenditures are projected to be approximately \$1.4 million below budget for the fiscal year.

Committee Members engaged in an in-depth discussion of traffic and infrastructure priorities, as well as the reasons for excess business license collections.

Ms. Szubert also mentioned that the internal control assessment had been completed and would be presented at the Town Council meeting later that day.

Mayor Belt addressed one of the report's findings regarding credit cards. Although the finding was not deemed material, it identified a need to refine credit card processes despite existing restrictions

on each card. Chairman Farrell noted that the auditor had a strong sensitivity to credit cards due to experiences with other organizations, but was comfortable once they understood the Town's procedures and controls.

**VII. Chairman's Report:**

Chairman Farrell briefly noted that the Audit Committee was pleased with the work done on the assessment of financial controls and the outcome. He reported that the external reviewer was extremely satisfied with the Town's overall controls and financial standing.

**VIII. Treasurer's Report:**

**A. Monthly Budget Report**

This item was covered during the Mid-Fiscal Year Budget Review discussion.

**IX. Citizens' Comments:**

There were no citizens' comments.

**X. Committee Member's Comments:**

There were no Committee Member comments.

**XI. Adjournment:**

*Chairman Farrell adjourned the meeting at 10:53 am.*

Submitted by,

  
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Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

2-16-2024  
Date