

**TOWN COUNCIL**  
**Municipal Center Council Chambers**  
**January 6, 2026, 2025, 1:00 pm**

**Minutes**

**I. Call to Order: *Mayor Belt called the meeting to order at 1:00 pm.***

**II. Pledge of Allegiance**

**III. Roll Call:**

**Present at the Meeting:** Bradley Belt, *Mayor*  
Russell Berner, *Mayor Pro Tem*  
Luke Farrell, *Council Member*  
Madeleine Kaye, *Council Member*  
Lance Spencer, *Council Member*

**Also Present:** Stephanie Monroe Tillerson, *Town Administrator*  
Dorota Szubert, *Finance Director*  
Mac McQuillin, *Town Attorney*  
John Taylor, Jr., *Planning Director*  
Kate Russell, *Mauldin & Jenkins*

**IV. Approval of Minutes:**

**A. Minutes of the Town Council Meeting of December 2, 2025**

Mayor Belt stated that the minutes for the Town Council Meeting of December 2, 2025, were circulated prior to the meeting.

Mayor Belt noted that he had submitted a few edits and clarifications to the clerk, primarily to address typos. Mayor Pro Tem Berner indicated he had also submitted edits to the clerk.

With the changes submitted by Mayor Belt and Mayor Pro Tem Berner, the minutes were approved.

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

**Joanne Hennessy, Planning Commission Chair – 12 Blue Heron Pond Road**

Ms. Hennessy requested that Council remand the dock designation change issue back to the Planning Commission. She explained that since their last meeting, they had received more information and wanted to perform further due diligence to provide the Council with a complete analysis.

John White identified himself as the owner of the dock in question (245 Eagle Point) and stated he agreed with remanding the matter back to the Planning Commission.

**Brad McIlvain – 146 Blue Heron Pond Road**

Mr. McIlvain commended the Council for conducting an internal controls assessment, suggesting it was necessary given the informal nature of some island operations. He questioned whether Town-issued credit cards were necessary and suggested that a timely reimbursement policy may suffice.

Mayor Belt responded that credit cards were issued to a limited number of Town officials with appropriate spending limits, with the highest limits assigned to himself and the Mayor Pro Tem for emergency purposes. He noted that the limits on other cards were kept low (between \$1,000 and \$5,000), thereby mitigating risk.

**Shannon White, Chief Operating Officer for KICA (Kiawah Island Community Association)**

Ms. White addressed the Council regarding the drafted noise ordinance on the agenda. She explained that the ordinance's restrictions on commercial landscaping activities would significantly impact KICA operations, which typically begin at 7:00 AM, with some maintenance teams starting between 6:00 and 7:00 AM.

Ms. White requested that KICA receive the same carve-out as golf course maintenance, allowing them to start at 6:30 AM with no location or holiday restrictions. She outlined several concerns with the current draft:

- The location restriction would force all landscape teams onto three main roads during peak traffic times
- These roads represent only 13% of the total roadways KICA maintains
- The ordinance would prevent work on other roads, leisure trails, and boardwalks until after 8:00 AM
- KICA would be unable to handle overnight work orders immediately
- Golf courses are permitted to work without exception in the same neighborhood areas
- Home construction is permitted starting at 7:00 AM and creates substantially more noise
- The holiday exclusions do not align with KICA's holiday schedule, particularly on Presidents' Day and Veterans' Day
- The ordinance could hamper mosquito abatement work, which occurs between 4:00 and 6:00 AM

Ms. White concluded by requesting either the same restrictions as golf course maintenance teams or full exclusion from the definition of commercial landscaping.

Mayor Belt engaged in dialogue with Ms. White, asking whether a restriction on the use of powered equipment alone would be acceptable. Ms. White asked for clarification about whether this would include mowers as well as blowers. The Mayor confirmed it would apply to all powered equipment but noted a separate provision specifically addressing two-cycle gas-powered leaf blowers.

## **VI. Presentation:**

### **A. Internal Controls Assessment – Mauldin & Jenkins**

Kate Russell, Director in Mauldin & Jenkins Government Advisory Practice, presented the results of the Town's internal controls assessment. She explained that her practice is distinct from the audit practice and focuses solely on operational reviews, internal controls, and compliance assessments.

Ms. Russell outlined the scope of their work, which included:

- Assessing the design of financial controls
- Examining the depth and breadth of the internal controls environment
- Determining if controls were being implemented consistently
- Identifying any gaps in controls
- Providing process improvement recommendations

The assessment found that:

- The Town's financial internal controls and procedures are adequately designed
- Controls are consistently implemented and function as designed
- No significant control gaps were identified

Ms. Russell described their four-phase approach:

- Information gathering (policies, processes, audits, forms, templates)
- Staff interviews and shadowing
- Implementation testing through sample verification
- Report preparation

The assessment used an inherent risk evaluation process, examining generic risks before considering existing controls. They assessed based on transaction volume, vendor interactions, contracts,

operational procedures, inherent impact, fraud risk, and reputational risk. Six areas were selected for specific testing using convenience sampling.

Overall, Ms. Russell indicated the town is in a financially mature position with the right mix of controls that are neither overly burdensome nor lenient.

The assessment yielded two findings:

- Credit Card Documentation: While dollar limits were not exceeded, cards are sometimes borrowed between employees. She recommended strengthening documentation about card possession and usage.
- Procurement Documentation: Some procurement activities lacked robust supporting documentation. The new procurement policy should help address this going forward.

The assessment also provided 17 observations organized in three categories:

- Increased documentation or standardization of documentation
- Enhancing controls and security
- Process optimization opportunities

Ms. Russell commended the Town, the Audit Committee, and leadership for proactively undertaking the assessment, noting that it demonstrates a commitment to transparency and effective operations.

Mayor Belt thanked Ms. Russell and her team, as well as the Town's Audit Committee, Finance Director, and staff. He emphasized the administration's commitment to financial integrity and transparency, noting the recent adoption of revised accounting and procurement policies. He explained that while the Town had received clean opinions in the past, this assessment was designed to ensure they were "crossing t's and dotting i's."

Council Member Farrell provided extensive commentary, first asking Ms. Russell to share her background. She detailed her Master's in Public Administration from the University of Georgia, her experience as CFO of a Georgia state agency administering \$100 million in grants, her role as Executive Director of Administration for Explore Georgia, and her six years with Mauldin & Jenkins. He noted that the audit was conducted in conjunction with the financial audit to improve efficiency and thanked the Audit Committee Members for their expertise and contributions. He emphasized that the assessment addressed concerns that had arisen in SATAX work and Charitable Contributions, and the importance of addressing reputational risk.

Mayor Pro Tem Berner raised significant questions about past fraud, referencing an employee theft from approximately 10 years ago. He asked what controls prevent recurrence.

Ms. Tillerson stated that a number of controls had been put in place through previous Councils, including the Audit Committee and an Accounting Procedures Manual. Mayor Belt added that a control requiring at least two signatures for every expenditure was also implemented.

John Wilson, an audit committee member and a former Council Member, was invited to speak. He explained that he was a new Council Member at that time and detailed the rapid implementation of controls, including:

- New payroll system with stronger controls
- Reduction and control of credit card issuance
- Strengthened purchasing, disbursements, and petty cash procedures
- Enhanced bank account access controls
- Creation of the audit committee immediately after the incident

Mr. Wilson stated that there have been continuing improvements and expressed confidence that what we experienced back then could not happen today.

## VII. Updates:

### A. Mayor

Mayor Belt wished everyone a Happy New Year and announced several items:

- Quarterly Town Hall: Scheduled for January 22nd (Thursday) at 4:00 PM, serving as the annual state of the town address with open Q&A
- Strategic Planning Meetings: January 27-28 (Tuesday-Wednesday), open public meetings welcoming community input
- Beachfront Overlay District Workshop: January 16th at 10:00 AM, following up on substantial community interest from last year
- Tree Work Update: Continuing on Kiawah Island Parkway Thursday and Friday, with potential extension to January 10th if needed

Mayor Belt addressed the tree work continuing on Kiawah Island Parkway, acknowledging the significant traffic delays that occurred on December 29th. He explained that the Town hoped to schedule work for January/February, but contractor availability was limited because KICA had contracted with the same service provider. He took responsibility for the scheduling issues and explained that work was cut short and rescheduled when delays became excessive.

### B. Council Members

Mayor Pro Tem Berner reported on the following:

- He commended the CERT (Community Emergency Response Team) for their work during the marathon, where they effectively assisted several runners in distress, including two who fainted on the course.
- Reported attending the MUSC ribbon cutting and praised both the facility and its well-trained staff.
- Noted that he will be meeting with the STJFD Fire Chief Kunitzer in two weeks to implement tabletop exercises for the CERT group, one addressing hazardous spill response and another covering traumatic events on the island.

Council Member Kaye reported on the following:

- The composting initiative at the marathon is a partnership between the Go Green Committee and the resort. The effort reached 5,000 runners and produced 1.8 tons of compost, setting a record for the area. She credited Fran Williams (Go Green Committee Chair) and Liz King from the Resort.
- The launch of "Kiawah Conversations," focuses on resiliency, sustainability, wildlife, and the environment. The program will be held on Thursdays at 3:00 PM when "Our World" programs aren't scheduled. The first program on January 29th will feature Dr. Brian Shamblyn from the University of Georgia, who studies sea turtles.

Council Member Kaye shared concerning news about the latest Bobcat death, noting that while the animal was likely killed by a vehicle, the necropsy found six anticoagulant rodenticides in its liver. The bobcat was in extremely poor health, at less than half its tagged weight from the previous year. Kaye indicated that she and town biologist Jim Jordan would engage with major pest control providers on the island to address this issue.

Council Member Farrell thanked various committees and individuals for their work in 2025:

- The Audit Committee for their expertise and time
- The SATAX Committee members who spent more time than they probably ever spent on SATAX before.
- The staff members who worked on Charitable Contributions

- Individual staff members, including John Taylor (planning and zoning education), Dorota Szubert (finance, audit, and SATAX), Jim Jordan (wildlife, birds, Captain Sams Spit), and Brian Gottshalk (Paths and flood remediation)
- Special recognition for Town Administrator Stephanie Tillerson, who taught me a lot this year.

Council Member Farrell concluded with an announcement about oyster reef construction volunteering with the Kiawah Conservancy. He described making wire reefs at the Conservancy's newly purchased property, with sessions on January 7th, 14th, 26th, and February 4th at 10:00 AM.

**Council Member Spencer** raised awareness of personal household safety. He emphasized the importance of neighborhood watch, security cameras, and having someone check on homes during extended absences.

### C. Administrator

Ms. Tillerson provided several departmental updates:

#### Environmental and Natural Resources:

- Bobcat trapping beginning next week with 5 collars for bobcats and 3 for coyotes, continuing through mid-February
- Second deer survey underway, with November showing relatively low numbers per square mile
- Results will be presented at February's council meeting to determine if culling is needed

#### Technology Updates:

- Website and app overhaul in progress
- Currently in the final stages, now doing site map work
- New website hopefully launching by March

#### Events and Meetings:

- Liquid Pleasure event this Friday
- January 15th SCDOT Commission meeting in Columbia regarding transfer of a portion of Betsy Kerrison Parkway from Resurrection Road outbound to the roundabout.

#### Communications:

- Christmas tree collection reminders posted on website and e-blasts
- Collections on Thursdays with trees needing to be bare
- Encouraged residents to sign up for e-blasts to find answers to common questions

Mayor Belt added context on the SCDOT road ownership issue, noting that South Carolina has the fourth-largest number of miles under the state Department of Transportation's responsibility in the country, yet collects lower gas tax revenue than other states. This explains difficulties in getting SCDOT to maintain roads like Bohicket.

## VIII. Old Business:

### A. To Consider Approval of *Ordinance 2025-15 – An Ordinance to Amend the Noise Standards Within the Town of Kiawah Island and to Repeal Chapter 8, Sections 15-801 Through 15-807 of the Town Municipal Code – Second and Final Reading*

Mayor Belt explained that based on community feedback, the ordinance had been modified from first reading to focus only on prohibiting two-cycle gas-powered leaf blower engines, rather than all two and four-cycle landscaping equipment. This prohibition would be phased in over time.

**Council Member Farrell moved to approve the second and final reading of Ordinance 2025-15, amending the Town of Kiawah Island's noise standards. Council Member Spencer seconded the motion.**

During the discussion, Council Member Farrell asked about page 3, section F.4 regarding KICA's major arterial road provisions. This sparked dialogue about whether KICA should be considered a commercial entity under the ordinance. Mayor Belt proposed exempting KICA entirely from the commercial landscaping provisions, reasoning that the community association, in and of itself, represents most of the community, and that association members could address noise concerns directly with KICA.

After debate over the best location for this exemption, Council Member Spencer suggested it go under F(2). Mayor Pro Tem Berner sought assurance about the wording, initially suggesting a delay, but Mayor Belt proposed adding language stating that the community association is exempt from these provisions.

Council Member Kaye raised the topic of four-cycle leaf blowers, referencing research Mayor Pro Tem Berner had done on a Stihl model meeting acceptable decibel ratings (65 dBa). Mayor Pro Tem Berner credited Mr. Roger Warren for providing this information. The Council confirmed the ordinance only prohibits two-cycle leaf blowers, not four-cycle models.

Matthew Stanis from Kiawah Partners and Club described challenges with battery-powered equipment, including charging requirements, limited operating time, and the number of batteries needed for a day's work. He supported the focus on two-cycle leaf blowers rather than all equipment.

Additional discussion addressed:

- Golf course maintenance provisions needed to include Sundays
- Whether the Kiawah Island Club should receive similar exemptions for its facilities

Council agreed to amend the ordinance to add Sunday to the golf course maintenance exemption and to exempt KICA from the commercial landscaping restrictions.

*Council Member Kaye moved to amend the ordinance to exempt KICA from section F(2) and add Sunday to golf course maintenance provisions. Mayor Pro Tem Berner seconded the amendment, and it was unanimously approved.*

*Following the discussion, the motion to approve the second and final reading of Ordinance 2025-15 as amended was unanimously approved.*

## **IX. New Business:**

### **A. Appointment of Mayor Pro Tempore**

Mayor Belt explained that state statute mandates the appointment or reappointment of Mayor Pro Tem after the general election inauguration.

*Council Member Farrell nominated Mayor Pro Tem Berner for another term as Mayor Pro Tem, not to exceed two years. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

### **B. Appointment of Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd as Town Attorney**

Mayor Belt stated that the same state statute mandates the appointment or reappointment of the Town Attorney, who may be an individual or a law firm, and that the Town Attorney must be a member of the SC State Bar, as provided in the ordinance.

*The Council unanimously approved the appointment of Mr. McQuillan and Haynsworth Sinkler Boyd as Town Attorney.*

### **C. Appointment of the Town Treasurer/Finance Director**

*Mayor Belt moved to appoint Dorota Szubert as Town Treasurer and Finance Director. Council Member Farrell seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

**D. Appointment of the Town Clerk**

*Mayor Belt moved to appoint Petra Reynolds to continue as Town Clerk. Council Member Farrell seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

**E. To Consider Approval of Ordinance 2026-01 - An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 12 – Land Use Planning and Zoning Ordinance Article II. Zoning, Division 2. Zoning Map/Districts. Sec. 12-62. Zoning Map to amend the Key Locations Map to modify the fixed dock designation to allow a floating dock at the subject property, 245 Eagle Point Road, Kiawah Island, SC. (TMS# 265-02-00-167) – Public Hearing and First Reading**

**F. To Consider Approval of Ordinance 2026-02 - An Ordinance to Amend Chapter 12 – Land Use Planning and Zoning Ordinance Article II. Zoning, Division 2. Zoning Map/Districts. Section 12-78. Dock Key Locations to modify the fixed dock designation to allow a floating dock at the subject property, 245 Eagle Point Road, Kiawah Island, SC. (TMS# 265-02-00-167) – Public Hearing and First Reading**

Mr. Taylor introduced the zoning and map amendment request jointly, explaining they involved a rezoning request to change a fixed dock designation to a floating dock at 245 Eagle Point Road. He noted the Planning Commission had recommended approval, but additional information had been presented since then, with the applicant and concerned parties supporting remanding the matter back to the Planning Commission for further review.

*Council Member Farrell made a motion to move into Public Hearing. Mayor Pro Tem Berner seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

During the public hearing, no additional comments were offered beyond those made during citizen comments.

*Council Member Farrell made a motion to exit the Public Hearing and return to regular business. Mayor Pro Tem Berner seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

*Council Member Farrell moved to remand the matter back to the Planning Commission for reconsideration of their prior approval. Mayor Pro Tem Berner seconded the motion.*

Council Member Farrell asked a clarifying question about whether the applicant could currently have boat access. Mr. Taylor explained that under the fixed dock designation, the property is limited to crabbing/fishing pier head uses without boats. In contrast, the floating designation would allow boats, lifts, and moveable parts.

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

**G. To Consider Approval of the Appointments to the Arts & Cultural Events Council**

Mayor Belt presented the reappointments of current members plus two new appointments: Dean Mannion and Jack Burnett, noting their impressive and relevant backgrounds were included in the materials.

*Mayor Pro Tem Berner moved to approve the appointments to the Arts & Cultural Events Council. Council Member Farrell seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

**H. To Consider Approval of the Civic and Cultural Center Addition Construction Committee Charter**

Mayor Belt noted the charter had been revised based on Council Member comments.

*Mayor Pro Tem Berner made a motion to approve the Civic and Cultural Center Addition Construction Committee Charter. Council Member Farrell seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

**I. To Consider Approval of the Amendment to the Audit Committee Charter**

Council Member Farrell explained that the only substantive change to the charter was extending member terms from one year to two years. He emphasized the need for continuity in financial oversight and suggested staggered terms through voluntary resignations after the first year.

***Council Member Farrell moved to approve the amendment to the Audit Committee Charter. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.***

#### **J. To Consider Approval of the Amendment to the Public Safety Committee Charter**

Mayor Pro Tem Berner explained the charter amendment would clarify committee membership, specifying representation from KICA, KIGR, Edens, St. Johns Fire District, and Kiawah residents.

***Mayor Pro Tem Berner moved to approve the Public Safety Committee Charter as revised during the discussion. Council Member Farrell seconded the motion.***

Extensive discussion ensued about membership composition and numbers. Issues included:

- The math of "at least four members," including one each from five entities
- Whether to specify minimum or maximum numbers
- Adding the Kiawah Island Club as a required entity, given their employment size and emergency access needs
- Clarifying St. Johns Fire District Commission rather than just the fire department
- Current overlap with commissioners who are also residents or resort employees

After discussion, Council agreed to modify the language to state that the committee shall comprise not more than seven members, including no more than one representative from KICA, KIGR, Kiawah Island Club, Edens, St. John's Fire Commission, and Kiawah Island residents, all approved by the Mayor and Town Council. The one-year term was deemed appropriate.

***Following the discussion, the motion to approve the Public Safety Committee Charter as revised during the discussion was unanimously approved.***

#### **K. To Consider Approval of the Design Review Board Charter**

***Council Member Farrell made a motion to approve the Design Review Board Charter. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion.***

Mr. Taylor explained that the charter was consistent with the structure approved by Council when they established the Design Review Board last month. The board would have five members, at least three of whom would be island property owners or residents with expertise in design professions, including architecture, landscape architecture, urban planning, construction, or similar fields.

Discussion about the scope of the Design Review Board's authority. Mayor Pro Tem Berner questioned coverage of single-family homes on Eugenia Avenue, citing ordinance section 12-130, which stated the purpose was for "commercial, mixed use, civic and multifamily residential developments."

Mr. Taylor explained that the exemptions in the applicability section exclude single-family residential, except for those not subject to review or purview of any established architectural review board. This would include certain Eugenia Avenue properties not under KICA covenants.

Mayor Belt provided context about KICA's stated intention to establish its own Architectural Review Board, though no details had been forthcoming. He noted the Town's Design Review Board would still be necessary for Freshfields and certain Eugenia properties, regardless.

Council identified a discrepancy between the intent language in Section 12-130 and the applicability section of the ordinance, agreeing that this should be corrected through a formal process at a later date.

Council Member Spencer raised broader enforcement concerns, noting an increasing perception that ARB approvals could be ignored with only the loss of the deposit as a consequence. He asked about the Town's ability to enforce subordinate approvals. Mayor Belt and Mr. Taylor explained that the Town cannot enforce private covenant restrictions under state law but could adopt similar standards into the Town code for enforcement.

Council Member Spencer also questioned whether five members were sufficient, given the board's scope, compared to seven on the Planning Commission. Mr. Taylor explained that they kept membership lower due to anticipated lower review volume and challenges in finding qualified local members.

*Following the discussion, the motion to approve the Design Review Board Charter was unanimously approved.*

**L. To Consider Approval of Resolution 2026-01 - A Resolution to Amend the Town of Kiawah Island Planning Department Fee Schedule for the Design Review Board**

Council Member Farrell stated that the proposed fee schedule was presented to the Ways and Means Committee and approved unanimously that morning. The changes establish fees for the new Design Review Board while striking through Landscaping and Tree Preservation Board fees. He acknowledged a potential gap in which tree removal might occur without fees during the transition but noted that these fees do not cover our costs anyway. He highlighted that the fees mirror those in other jurisdictions, such as Hilton Head, Mount Pleasant, and Charleston.

*Council Member Farrell made a motion to approve Resolution 2026-01, amending the Planning Department Fee Schedule for the Design Review Board. Mayor Pro Tem Berner seconded the motion.*

Mr. Taylor added that the schedule includes a one-time fee rather than charging per review, resulting in a lower overall cost than in other jurisdictions.

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

Mayor Belt stated that pending litigation continuing into 2026 involves Captain Sams Spit, an appeal of a BZA matter, contract negotiations with service providers, and obtaining sewer coverage for the Town Municipal Center from the Seabrook Island Utility Commission, which will be the subject of the legal advice during the Executive Session.

*Mayor Pro Tem Berner made a motion to enter into the Executive Session. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

**X. Executive Session:**

**A. Executive Session to receive legal advice protected by the Attorney-Client Privilege (S.C. Code Ann. 34-4-70-(a)(2)) regarding pending legal matters, contract arrangements, and possible purchase of property.**

Upon Returning to Open Session, the Council May Take Action on Matters Discussed in Executive Session.

*Mayor Pro Tem Berner made a motion to exit the Executive Session and return to the Regular Session. Council Member Farrell seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

Mayor Belt stated that the Council received legal advice on various pending matters but made no decisions during the Executive Session.

*Council Member Farrell made a motion for the Council to authorize the Mayor to enter into negotiations to buy a single piece of real estate. Council Member Kaye seconded the motion, and it was unanimously approved.*

**XI. Citizens' Comments:**

**Larry Wolohan – 406 Snowy Egret**

Mr. Wolohan asked whether the Town knew if KICA and Freshfields used Bobcat-friendly poisons and whether people could be asked to sign a pledge. Mayor Belt indicated that a Bobcat Guardian pledge program is available on the Town's website.

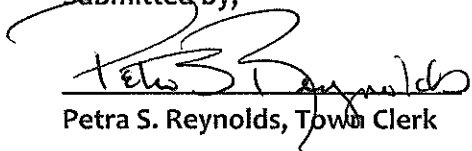
**XII. Council Member Comments:**

No Council Members offered additional comments.

**XIII. Adjournment:**

*With no further business, Mayor Belt adjourned the meeting at 3:48 pm.*

Submitted by,



Petra S. Reynolds, Town Clerk

2-10-2024  
Date