



GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes
Regular Meeting
June 2, 2026
6:05 p.m.

Council Chambers
301 University Ridge
Greenville, South Carolina

Council Members

Benton Blount, *Chairman, District 19*
Rick Bradley, *Vice-Chairman, District 26*
Liz Seman, *Chairwoman Pro Tem, District 24*
Joey Russo, *District 17*
Kelly Long, *District 18*
Stephen Shaw, *District 20*
Curt McGahhey, *District 21*
Frank Farmer, *District 22*
Alan Mitchell, *District 23*
Ennis Fant, Sr., *District 25*
Garey Collins, *District 27*
Dan Tripp, *District 28*

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place, and agenda was posted online, at 301 University Ridge, Greenville, and made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations, and concerned citizens.

Council Members Absent

None

Council Members Remote Participation

None

Staff Present

Joe Kernell, *County Administrator*
Ted Lambrecht, *Deputy County Administrator*
Jason Martin, *Assistant County Administrator*
Chris Antley, *County Attorney*
Regina McCaskill, *Clerk to Council*

Jessica Stone, *Deputy Clerk to Council*
Terrence Galloway, *Information Systems*
Hesha Gamble, *Assistant County Administrator*
Ronald Hollister, *Assistant County Administrator*
Ruth Parris, *Budget Director*

Others Present

Sheriff Hobart Lewis
Jay Gresham, *Clerk of Court*
Beverly James, *Executive Director, Greenville County Library System*

Call to Order

Chairman Blount

Invocation

Dr. Richard Gibbons
First Presbyterian Church, Greenville

Pledge of Allegiance

Item (4) **Approval of Minutes**

a. May 19, 2026 – Regular County Council Meeting

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to approve the minutes of the May 19, 2026, Regular County Council Meeting.

Motion carried.

Item (5) **Proclamations**

a. Forging Strong Fathers and Families Month

Chairman Blount presented a proclamation designating June 2026 as Forging Strong Fathers and Families Month in Greenville County.

b. National Garden Club Week

Councilor Long presented a proclamation designating the week of June 7 – 13, 2026, as National Garden Club Week in Greenville County.

c. Recognizing the Contributions of Local Business Owners in Greenville County

Councilor Shaw presented a proclamation in recognition of the contribution of local business owners in Greenville County.

Item (6) **Appearances – Current Agenda Items**

- **Jeff Lawson** – appeared regarding Item 11.a. Transportation Penny Sales and Use Tax Referendum

Item (7) **Public Hearings**

a. Piedmont Public Service District – Property Transfer for Parks

A public hearing was held for the purpose of receiving comments from the public regarding an ordinance to authorize the transfer of ownership of approximately 3.68 acres of real property located off Ridge Row Street and Langston Street in Greenville County to the Piedmont Public Service District, and to authorize the execution of deeds and any other documents and agreements related thereto.

There being no speakers, Councilor Collins declared the public hearing closed.

b. Project Augusta Arbor II / Fee in Lieu of Tax Agreement

A public hearing was held for the purpose of receiving comments from the public regarding an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee in lieu of tax agreement by and between Greenville County, South Carolina and BRI Augusta Arbor II, QOZB, LP (*formerly known as Project Augusta Arbor II*), with respect to certain economic development property in the County, whereby such property would be subject to certain payments in lieu of taxes; and other matters related thereto.

There being no speakers, Councilor Collins declared the public hearing closed.

c. County of Greenville FY2027 Budget Ordinance

A public hearing was held for the purpose of receiving comments from the public regarding an ordinance adopting the County of Greenville FY2027 Budget.

- **Hayden Keene** – appeared in favor of the proposed
- **Sandy Jordan** – appeared in favor of the proposed
- **Joshua Good** – appeared in favor of the proposed.

There being no other speakers, Vice-Chairman Bradley declared the public hearing closed.

Item (8) **Consent Agenda**

- a. Animal Control Officer Commissioning / Daniel Custer**
- b. Initiate Zoning Text Amendment / Mountain Creek Community District**

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved approval of the Consent Agenda items.

Motion carried.

Item (9) **Ordinances – Third Reading**

a. Zoning Ordinances

- i. CZ-2026-017,** Property of Frances Bishop, located at 102 Boling Road, requesting rezoning from R-S to R-12.

Action: Vice-Chairman Bradley moved adoption of the ordinance at third reading.

Motion carried.

- ii. CZ-2026-018,** Property of Poinsett Development Partners, located at 25 Goldsmith Street, Poinsett Highway, and Hammett Street Ext., requesting rezoning from C-2 and I-1 to S-1.

Action: Vice-Chairman Bradley moved adoption of the ordinance at third reading.

Motion carried.

- iii. **CZ-2026-019,** Property of Jordi Viveros and Yudy Toro, located at 106 Riverside Drive, requesting rezoning from R-20 to R-7.5.

Action: Vice-Chairman Bradley moved adoption of the ordinance at third reading.

Motion carried.

- iv. **CZ-2026-021,** Property of Jonathan E. Chaney, located at 2513 Poinsett Highway, Woodland Drive and Tindal Road, requesting rezoning from C-1 to C-3.

Action: Vice-Chairman Bradley moved adoption of the ordinance at third reading.

Motion carried by a roll call vote of eleven (Russo, Long, Blount, Shaw, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Collins, Tripp) in favor and one (McGahhey) abstention.

- v. **CZ-2026-022,** Property of Augusta Grove-Greenville LLC, located on Old Grove Road and Bracken Road, requesting rezoning from I-2 to I-1.

Action: Vice-Chairman Bradley moved adoption of the ordinance at third reading.

Motion carried by a roll call vote of eleven (Russo, Long, Blount, Shaw, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Collins, Tripp) in favor and one (Long) in opposition.

- vi. **CZ-2026-023,** Property of Francis Bishop, located at 102 Boling Road, requesting rezoning from R-S to R-12.

Action: Vice-Chairman Bradley moved adoption of the ordinance at third reading.

Motion carried.

b. Piedmont Public Services District – Property Transfer for Parks

Action: Councilor Collins moved for adoption at third reading an ordinance to authorize the transfer of ownership of approximately 3.68 acres of real property located off Ridge Row Street and Langston Street in Greenville County to the Piedmont Public Service District, and to authorize the execution of deeds and any other documents and agreements related thereto.

Motion carried.

Item (10) Ordinances – Second Reading

a. County of Greenville FY2027 Budget Ordinance

Action: Vice-Chairman Bradley moved for approval at second reading an ordinance adopting the County of Greenville FY2027 Budget.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated she appreciated the desire to recognize the County's Public Safety employees; however, she was of the opinion they could do better for all the employees.

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to amend the budget in order to give all employees a 4% salary increase instead of the proposed 2.5% salary increase for all employees and the additional 2.5% for Public Safety.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman asked Mr. Kernell to share the dollar amount associated with her proposed amendment.

Mr. Kernell stated, if approved, Ms. Seman's amendment would require an additional \$2.5 million for salaries. He stated the amount would be spread across several funds, with the General Fund taking the largest hit. Mr. Kernell stated the additional funding could also be derived from cuts in other areas or from the Fund Balance.

Councilor Fant asked whether taking the additional funding from the Fund Balance would affect the County's Triple-A bond rating.

Mr. Kernell stated the rating would not be affected, but would leave very little room.

Councilor Shaw asked Mr. Kernell if the County had maternity leave.

Mr. Kernell stated employees can utilize sick leave for maternity leave. FMLA also provided 12 weeks of leave if they had enough vacation or sick leave to cover the entire leave. Mr. Kernell stated the County had a sick leave bank in which employees could donate leave to other employees.

Councilor Tripp asked if the proposed change would hurt or help the Sheriff's Office.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated while she appreciated law enforcement, she also appreciated employees working in Code Enforcement, Animal Control, Roads and Bridges, and the courts. The County was in a "customer service business," and the employees at every level should be compensated.

Motion as presented carried.

Action: Councilor Collins moved to allow for amendments at third reading.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman suggested any proposed amendments at third reading be submitted in writing.

Mr. Antley stated that requirement was already in place per Council Rules.

Motion as presented carried.

Action: Councilor McGahhey moved to remove the proposed six new Deputy positions for the Sheriff's Office.

Councilor McGahhey stated the Sheriff's Office had 50-60 positions they could not fill; adding six more positions would not solve the problem of deputy retention. He planned to introduce incentives to encourage hiring and retention of new deputies.

Councilor Tripp asked if the proposed six positions would cost the County should they remained vacant.

Mr. Kernell stated there was no cost to the County as long as the positions were vacant.

Councilor Tripp stated if there was no cost for the vacant positions, he would suggest giving Sheriff Lewis the flexibility to hire. Greenville County was at the crossroads of two major highways. He stated there had been two shootings in his neighborhood since he moved in. Crime was rampant and growing. He stated Council should support the "thin blue line."

Councilor McGahhey stated his motion had nothing to do with supporting or opposing the Sheriff. If that office was able to fill its existing vacancies and needed additional deputies, he would be in favor of adding positions. He stated the six positions would not help with hiring and retention.

Councilor Farmer asked if Sheriff Lewis wanted the additional positions.

Chairman Blount asked whether there was a negative impact from not being granted the positions, given the many vacancies at the Sheriff's Office.

Mr. Kernell stated other departments had faced the same hiring and retention difficulties. At one point, EMS had 50-60 vacancies; currently, it was almost at full capacity. Mr. Kernell stated, if he recalled correctly, the Sheriff's Office had gone two years without increasing its rolls; that could become problematic, as they would have to catch up down the road. There was no cost to the County as long as the positions remained unfilled.

Councilor McGahhey asked how much the six positions would cost if they were filled.

Mr. Kernell stated the cost would be about \$720,000 for the first year. However, they never budgeted a full year for the first year. He stated they budgeted six months to account for recruiting time and other factors; the total cost for six months would be about \$360,000.

Councilor McGahhey stated he had heard if deputies did not receive the requested \$12,500 raise, the Sheriff's Office would lose 100 employees. He failed to see how adding six additional positions would solve the retention issue. Mr. McGahhey stated he did not think the Sheriff's Office would be able to fill all its vacancies in the next six months. There were ways to incentivize people to stay. He stated positions could be added later, if needed.

Councilor Long asked if the funding for the current vacancies was still in the budget.

Mr. Kernell stated the money remained in the budget. However, they still had to have people out on the roads, and overtime was being utilized quite frequently. The budget would not necessarily reflect savings, as every hour of overtime was worth 1.5 times straight time. He stated the Sheriff's Office would probably exceed its overtime budget because of the vacancies.

Councilor Long stated they should properly plan for more overtime, rather than just looking at what was being used for salaries. She asked whether it would make more sense to increase overtime and allocate the funds to new-hire salaries. She could see the point of questioning the addition of new positions, given that those funds were actually being used for overtime; the point was to be transparent.

Mr. Kernell stated the County had built-in overtime for some positions; however, budgeting for overtime was the most inefficient use of wages. They did not want to “just throw money into overtime.” Instead, overtime was budgeted based on predictions of what was happening at the time. The economy was struggling. The Sheriff’s Office comprised less than 25% of the County’s workforce. The Detention Center had bigger problems with hiring and retention because those employees were paid less. He stated the challenge with the Detention Center was that there were always a “full slate of guests” at the facility. When someone did not show up for their shift, management was forced to rely on overtime. Other departments could shift resources and avoid using overtime. The problem with hiring and retention was not just with the Sheriff’s Office. Other areas of Public Safety, Building Inspections, and Code Enforcement also had issues. Mr. Kernell stated it was not more efficient to “plug in a bunch more overtime.” The key was to figure out a way to recruit and retain people. He stated Covid Pandemic “threw a wrinkle” in employment plans, and it was not just the County experiencing difficulties.

Councilor McGahhey stated he would like to see shift differentials for uniformed deputies, dispatchers, and Detention Center employees. They were very hard jobs. No one wanted to get shot, spit on, or have feces thrown at them. Mr. McGahhey suggested encouraging military veterans to apply. Mr. McGahhey stated he planned to offer some incentives that would likely cost the County about \$1.5 million. He suggested changing some exempt employees to non-exempt so they could be paid for overtime. All the civil positions within Public Safety were full. Those positions did not need incentives. Mr. McGahhey suggested keeping Captains with the Sheriff’s Office on exempt pay status and put them back on the step plan.

Councilor Tripp stated Mr. McGahhey’s comments were not germane to the motion.

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman called for the question.

Without objection, the motion to call for the question carried.

Motion to remove the proposed six new Deputy positions for the Sheriff’s Office was denied by a roll call vote of three (Long, McGahhey, Collins) in favor and nine (Russo, Blount, Shaw, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Tripp) in opposition.

Councilor Collins stated during his ride-alongs with the Sheriff’s Office, pay was the main complaint. There were currently about 40 vacancies at the Sheriff’s Office, with the potential of more in the next 90 days.

Action: Councilor Collins moved to install a shift pay differential for deputies of \$2 per hour for 7 pm to 7 am shifts.

**Point of
Order:**

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated Council only hired three employees; she questioned Council's authority to tell the Sheriff, or any other department head, how to allocate funding. She stated they could make suggestions.

Mr. Antley stated he would need to research the issue. He would take it under advisement and get back to Council, adding that Council could not control what an elected official did.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated she definitely loved the innovative aspect of Mr. Collins' motion; however, she wanted to be sure of its legality.

Councilor McGahhey stated the Administrator, Mr. Kernell, worked for Council. They had the authority to direct him on policy matters. He did not know whether the motion was a budget or a policy issue; however, Council had the authority to determine how employees would be paid.

Mr. Kernell stated Mr. McGahhey was correct; however, he would recommend having the discussion in a workshop. He stated he had no idea what the costs involved would be, and he would hate to see Council approve a motion that would put the County in a bad fiscal situation. Mr. Kernell suggested costing it out first to be transparent and responsible before voting on the issue.

Chairman Blount stated he agreed with Mr. Kernell and assured his colleagues another workshop would be scheduled to address those more intricate suggestions.

Councilor Collins stated he agreed, as he had multiple amendments he wanted to make at third reading. He stated he would withdraw his motion and present it again at third reading.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman asked whether the upcoming performance review would play into the issue. The results could be very germane to the conversation. She suggested waiting for those results to gain more clarity.

Councilor Long asked whether everything had to be decided in the budget or if they could discuss the issue later, based on the performance review results.

Chairman Blount suggested discussing Mr. Long's concern during the workshop.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated Council needed to be cautious of its fiscal duty to pass the budget on schedule. She suggested they continue moving forward, make amendments germane to the budget at third reading, and allow additional amendments at a later date, if needed, based on the results of the performance evaluation.

Action:

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to approve the County of Greenville FY2027 Budget Ordinance as amended.

Motion carried by a roll call vote of nine (Long, Blount, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Collins, Tripp) in favor and three (Russo, Shaw, McGahhey) in opposition.

b. Greenville County Library / FY2027 Budget Millage

Action: Councilor Collins moved for approval at second reading an ordinance to approve the appropriation of funds for the Greenville County Library System for the fiscal year beginning July 1, 2026, and ending June 30, 2027; and to authorize the annual ad valorem property tax millage levy for library purposes.

Motion carried.

c. Old Mill Estates Special Tax District / Millage Request

Action: Councilor Collins moved for approval at second reading an ordinance to approve the Old Mill Estates Special Tax District Commissioners' request for an increase to its current ad valorem property tax millage levy.

Motion carried.

d. Project Augusta Arbor II / Fee in Lieu of Tax Agreement

Action: Councilor Collins moved for approval at second reading an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee in lieu of tax agreement by and between Greenville County, South Carolina and BRI Augusta Arbor II QOZB, LP (formerly known as Project Augusta Arbor II), with respect to certain economic development property in the County, whereby such property would be subject to certain payments in lieu of taxes; and other matters related thereto.

Councilor Long stated her biggest concern about the item in question was the fact that there were no jobs tied to the FILOT.

Motion carried by a roll call vote of eight (Russo, Blount, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Tripp) in favor and four (Long, Shaw, McGahhey, Collins) in opposition.

Item (11) Ordinances – First Reading

a. Transportation Penny Sales and Use Tax and Referendum

Motion: Councilor McGahhey moved to suspend Council Rule IV (B)(1) in order to present the Transportation Penny Sales and Use Tax ordinance by title only.

Motion carried.

Councilor McGahhey presented for first reading an ordinance to levy and impose a one percent sales and use tax subject to a referendum, with Greenville County, pursuant to Section 4-37-30 of the Code of Laws of South Carolina, 1976, as amended; to define the specific purposes and designate the projects for which the proceeds of the tax may be used; to provide the maximum time for which such tax may be imposed; to provide the estimated cost of the projects funded from the proceeds of the tax; to provide for a county-wide referendum on the imposition of the sales and use tax and the issuance of general obligation bonds and to prescribe the contents of the ballot questions in the referendum;

to provide for the conduct of the referendum by the Board of Elections and Voter Registration of Greenville County; to provide for the administration of the tax, if approved; to provide for the payment of the tax, if approved; and to provide for other matters relating thereto.

Chairman Blount referred the item to the Committee of the Whole.

Item (12) **Committee Reports**

a. Committee of the Whole

No report.

b. Committee on Finance

No report.

c. Committee on Communications and Governmental Affairs

Councilor Farmer stated the next Public Communications Forum (*hosted by the Communications and Governmental Affairs Committee*) was scheduled for June 9 at 5:00 p.m.

d. Committee on Planning and Development

Vice-Chairman Bradley stated the committee approved the open space residential development ordinance, and it would be presented to Council at its next meeting.

e. Roads, Infrastructure and Public Works Committee

No report.

f. Committee on Public Safety and Human Services

Councilor Collins stated he attended the Fire Chief's meeting earlier in the day. MedCom was working very hard with the hospital to reduce EMS wait times.

g. Oversight Ad Hoc Committee

Councilor Long stated the top six companies would be interviewed the following week. She hoped to have a vendor chosen in the next few weeks and move forward with the audit.

h. Short-Term Rentals Ad Hoc Committee

No report.

Item (13) **Public Comments**

- **John Jennings** – appeared regarding the Planning Commission

Item (14) **Administrator's Report**

No report.

Item (15) **Requests and Motions by Council Members**

- a. **Suspend Council Rule III (D)(10) in order to Reconsider AH Magnolia Grove Holdings, LLC (formerly Project Magnolia) / Fee in Lieu of Tax Agreement**

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to suspend Council Rule III (D)(10) in order to make a motion to reconsider an item from the May 5, 2026, County Council meeting.

Councilor Shaw stated he felt the request did not fit under the Council's rule for a motion to reconsider, as there had to be new information.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated there was new information.

Councilor Shaw stated the Chairman had to determine whether something constituted new information. It required either a Council vote or the Chairman would make the determination, in the case of a tie vote.

Chairman Blount stated they needed to vote on the motion to suspend the rule before discussing the item.

Councilor Long stated if there was new information, Council needed time to consider the information prior to voting.

Motion as presented carried.

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to reconsider the action taken at the May 5, 2026, Regular County Council meeting regarding the third reading consideration of AH Magnolia Grove Holding, LLC / Fee in Lieu of Tax Agreement.

Councilor Long stated she wanted to know what the new information was.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated there was now an actual tenant for the property. It was her understanding the initial vote to deny was due to the lack of a tenant, and the property was considered a "spec" building. She stated Mr. Stewart, CEO of GADC, was in attendance and available to answer questions.

Councilor Long stated she felt Council needed a bit more time to render a good decision, rather than making it on the floor.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated she disagreed. The concern expressed by those who voted against it was there was no company in contention. There was now a company attached to the property, and in order to provide them with the proper information about the space, they needed the FILOT. Ms. Seman stated that was the new information she was bringing forward to the body.

Councilor Long stated, as a member of the Finance Committee, she felt Council needed more information than simply knowing there was now a tenant. She stated that was not adequate information to reconsider the vote. There were no jobs associated with the proposed FILOT. She stated Council should not vote without more discussion.

Chairman Blount stated it was discussed in both the Finance Committee and on the Council floor that it was a speculative building. GADC added specific clauses requiring 80% occupancy before the FILOT actually went online. He stated it was his opinion the information shifted things. He stated he was under the impression it was the Chair's decision to determine if information was considered new for reconsideration purposes. Mr. Blount stated if it was determined it was not the Chair's decision, someone could challenge his decision, or the Council could vote on it.

Councilor Long stated she was not challenging the Chair's decision. She said the issue was that it should not have been brought to Council at the last minute. Ms. Long said there were "zero jobs" attached to the FILOT, and the only reason to request reconsideration was that it had been denied by a six-to-three vote. She said if reconsideration were granted, it would set a precedent. Anytime a vote did not go the way someone wanted, they could come up with new information and then not explain it fully. The people living near the property deserved to know more about the issue. Ms. Long said if the vote were changed, it would set the County up for a lawsuit.

Chairman Blount asked for clarification on whether new information was required to request reconsideration.

Councilor Long read the following from County Council Rules Section III, D.10.:

Motions to Reconsider: When a question has been decided, any member who has newly acquired information may at the same meeting of the Council, or at the next consecutive regular meeting of the Council, move for reconsideration. If the Council shall refuse to consider by a three-fourths vote, or upon reconsideration, shall affirm its initial decision, the motion shall not be in order for a period of one year, except by a three-fourths vote of those members present and voting. For all meetings after the meeting at which a said question was decided, 24-hour notice must be given of a Council Member's intent to move for reconsideration.

Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman stated, for clarification, the reason for asking to suspend the rule was because they were unable to take up the item at the last regular meeting.

Action: Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman called for the question.

Motion to call for the question carried by a roll call vote of eight (Russo, Blount, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Tripp) in favor and four (Long, Shaw, McGahhey, Collins) in opposition.

Motion to reconsider carried by a roll call vote of eight (Russo, Blount, Farmer, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Tripp) in favor and four (Long, Shaw, McGahhey, Collins) in opposition.

Action: Councilor Seman moved for adoption at third reading an ordinance authorizing the execution and delivery of a fee in lieu of tax agreement by and between Greenville County, South Carolina and AH Magnolia Grove Holdings, LLC, with respect to certain economic development property in the County, whereby such property would be subject to certain payments in lieu of taxes; and other matters related thereto.

Councilor McGahhey asked whether Max Stewart, CEO of GADC, could address Council regarding the item in question.

Chairman Blount stated he would allow Mr. Stewart to address Council.

Mr. Stewart stated the item was presented to the Finance Committee as a “spec” building. The committee discussed the rules in place for speculative projects. He stated there were rules to protect the Manufacturer's Equipment Exemption, which exempted any company that opened an operation in South Carolina from property taxes for the first five years. For the project in question, they eliminated that process within the Speculative Building Process; any company coming in had to pay taxes immediately from day one. Mr. Stewart stated there was now a tenant interested in the project. The prospective company did not own the building, which was why it was not before Council as an actual project. The company was not building its own building for the project. Mr. Stewart stated that GADC wanted to ensure taxes were collected from day one for the projects it was considering. The attorney for the site had confirmed there was a prospect in line.

Councilor Farmer asked whether any new jobs would be created and, if so, how many.

Mr. Stewart stated approximately 100 - 120 manufacturing jobs would be created. He stated it was a prospect at the current time, but the FILOT had to be in place beforehand, as they wanted to protect the property for the taxes to be collected.

Chairman Blount stated, to be clear, there were four Council Members who had opposed the type of FILOT in question. He stated he had been one of those individuals, and he had never voted on a simple speculative building. He stated GADC had actually put a pause on bringing them forward until they had a plan in place that would assure jobs, along with the 80% occupancy requirement. Mr. Blount stated he supported those types of projects because they created jobs and did not use the same standard format as a typical FILOT.

Councilor McGahhey stated that the FILOT would not be effective until the building was occupied at 80%; if the agreement's standards were not met, the FILOT would not “kick in.”

Mr. Stewart concurred.

Councilor Shaw stated he learned in one of his SCAC classes that FILOTs were good for manufacturing. He asked Mr. Stewart whether the FILOT in question was for manufacturing.

Mr. Stewart answered in the affirmative.

Motion as presented carried.

Requests and Motion continued

- Councilor Fant stated he wanted to bring something to Council's attention; it had been on his heart for some time. He had intentionally waited until the Legislative Session was over. Mr. Fant stated he wanted to encourage the Greenville County Legislative Delegation and the South Carolina General Assembly to seriously consider ending primary runoff elections in South Carolina. It was not a Republican or Democratic issue; it was about participation, fairness, and the kind of democracy he believed they all wanted to leave for the next generation. As a person of faith, he believed every voice mattered. Voting was one of the few places in society where, regardless of socioeconomic status, everyone was on equal ground. It was a sacred expression of equality and human dignity. Mr. Fant stated during every election cycle, 1000s of people participated in primary elections, only to see turnout drop precipitously in the runoff. A smaller and smaller group of voters ended up making decisions for an entire community. He stated runoff elections also imposed additional costs on counties. Election officials had to reopen polling locations, recruit workers, print ballots, and administer another election at a time when local governments were being asked to do more with limited resources. It was reasonable to ask whether those funds could be put to better use elsewhere. Mr. Fant stated the issue should be of concern to everyone. It was necessary to be honest about history. Primary runoffs became common in the South when election laws were often designed to limit the political power of African-Americans and lower-income whites. He stated that while no one in attendance had created that history, they all had a responsibility to examine whether those systems still served the cause of justice today. The moral question was simple: Should election laws encourage more participation or less? Mr. Fant stated he believed there should be a system that invited more citizens to the table, not one that left more voices behind. The strength of democracy was not measured by how many elections were held; it was measured by how many people participated. If voting systems consistently resulted in fewer people having a say, then there was a moral responsibility to ask whether there was a better way. Mr. Fant stated he was respectfully asking and urging the Greenville County Legislative Delegation to study the issue and consider reforms that would increase voter participation, strengthen confidence in our elections, save taxpayers money, and ensure that every voice had the opportunity to be heard. He stated democracy worked best when more people participated, not fewer.

Item (16) **Adjournment**

Action: There being no further business, Chairwoman Pro Tem Seman moved to adjourn.

The motion carried and the meeting was adjourned at 7:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Regina McCaskill
Clerk to Council