



## **Colleton County Council Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Date:** January 5, 2026

**Time:** 6:00 p.m.

Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, the news media was notified, and notice was posted 24 hours prior to the meeting.

**Call to Order:** County Attorney Sean Thornton called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

**Roll Call:** Chairman Scott Biering, Council Vice-Chairman Bubba Trippe, Councilman Steve Murdaugh, Councilman Johnny Frank, and Councilman Phillip Taylor were present. County Attorney Sean Thornton declared that a quorum was present.

**Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance:** Councilman Taylor gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

**Election of Council Chairman and Vice-Chairman:** County Attorney Sean Thornton asked for nominations for Council Chairman. Councilman Frank nominated Councilman Biering. The nomination was seconded by Councilman Trippe. The nomination carried unanimously.

County Attorney Sean Thornton turned the gavel over to Chairman Biering.

Chairman Biering asked for nominations for Vice-Chairman. Councilman Frank nominated Councilman Tripp for Vice-Chairman, seconded by Councilman Murdaugh. Discussion followed. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Post Election Actions:**

- a. **Chairman's Appointment of Standing Committees:** Chairman Biering stated that the Standing Committees appointments are as follows:

#### Administrative Committee

Chairman Scott Biering (Chairman)

Councilman Steve Murdaugh

Councilman Bubba Trippe

Capital Projects Committee

Councilman Phillip Taylor (Chairman)

Councilman Steve Murdaugh

Councilman Johnny Frank

Finance Committee

Councilman Steve Murdaugh (Chairman)

Councilman Bubba Trippe

Councilman Phillip Taylor

Planning and Development Committee

Councilman Johnny Frank (Chairman)

Chairman Scott Biering

Councilman Steve Murdaugh

Public Health and Safety Committee

Councilman Bubba Trippe (Chairman)

Chairman Scott Biering

Councilman Phillip Taylor

- b. Chairman's Designation of Three Members of Council to LCAA Board:** Chairman Biering stated that Councilman Taylor, Councilman Murdaugh, and Councilman Trippe are currently serving on the LCAA Board, and they have agreed to continue to serve on that Board.
- c. Election of Three Members of Council to LCOG:** Chairman Biering stated that Councilman Taylor, Chairman Biering, and Councilman Frank are currently serving on the LCOG, and they have agreed to continue to serve on that Board.

**Approval of Agenda:** Councilman Murdaugh made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilman Taylor. The motion carried unanimously.

**Approval of Minutes:** Chairman Biering requested a motion to approve the minutes of the Special Called Meeting of October 30, 2025; the Regular Meeting of November 3, 2025; the Special Called Meeting of November 10, 2025; the Regular Meeting of December 1, 2025; and the Special Called Meeting of December 15, 2025. Councilman Murdaugh made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Councilman Taylor. The motion carried unanimously.

**Appearances and Public Presentations:**

- a. 2025 Audit Report:** David Irwin of Mauldin and Jenkins, LLC presented the 2025 Audit Report for Colleton County. Discussion followed.

- b. Presentation by Senator Brad Hutto:** Senator Hutto provided an overview of his recent trip to Iowa to visit the largest data center in the world and discussed the potential benefits of a data center project for Colleton County.

**Public Comment:** (3 minutes per person/max time 20 minutes)

**Carol Black:** Ms. Black stated that she resides in Northern Virginia, where approximately four hundred data centers are located. She expressed concerns regarding the proposed data center in Colleton County and economic development in the County.

**Frank Santorella:** Mr. Santorella stated that he is a retired engineer. He explained that, in his professional capacity, he built closed-loop cooling systems similar to those proposed for the data center and discussed their operation and environmental impact.

**Willis Ponds:** Mr. Ponds stated that he has served on multiple county and state boards. He expressed trust in the individuals serving on the boards and County Council to make decisions regarding economic development that are in the best interest of Colleton County.

**Cyndi Roberts:** Ms. Roberts expressed concerns regarding the County budget and requested that Council conduct due diligence in researching the proposed data center prior to making any decisions.

**Cathy Sturgis:** Ms. Sturgis stated that she is opposed to data centers and expressed concerns about allowing a data center to locate in Colleton County.

**Joe Hamilton:** Mr. Hamilton stated that he is a wildlife biologist and expressed concerns regarding the proposed data center and its possible negative effects on the environment.

**Administrator's Briefing:** Administrator Higgs thanked Finance Director David Leathers and his department for their work on the 2025 Audit.

**Public Hearing:** Vice-Chairman Trippe made a motion to open the Public Hearing for Ordinance 25-O-11, Authorizing the Execution and Delivery of a Fee-In-Lieu of Tax and Special Source Credit Agreement by and between Colleton County, South Carolina, and a company known to the County as Project Quail, with respect to certain property located in the County, whereby such property will be subject to certain payments in lieu of taxes, including the provision of certain special source credits, and other matters related thereto; and Ordinance 25-O-12, Authorizing the Amendment of the Agreement for Development for Joint County Industrial Park by and between Colleton County, South Carolina, and Charleston County, South Carolina, providing for the development of a jointly owned and operated industrial/business park so as to include additional property located in Colleton County as part of the park, and other matters related thereto. The motion was seconded by Councilman Murdaugh and carried unanimously.

Economic Development Director Brantley Strickland explained that Project Quail, identified as Q&P Incorporated, was announced in October. He stated that the company is relocating its first East Coast operation to Colleton County and is a manufacturer of reverse osmosis water filtration systems. He further explained that the two ordinances on the agenda were to finalize the fee agreement with Q&P Incorporated and the Multi-County Industrial/Business Park Agreement.

Carol Black stated that she did not understand how FILOT agreements work and requested an explanation. Councilman Murdaugh responded that the item was raised during Public Comment and that he would address it during Council Time.

Carol Black stated that the ordinances are difficult for the general public to understand and requested that they be written in clearer language.

Councilman Murdaugh made a motion to close the Public Hearing, seconded by Councilman Taylor. The motion carried unanimously.

### **Old Business**

- a. **3rd Reading Ordinance 25-O-11 Authorizing the Execution and Delivery of a Fee-In-Lieu of Tax and Special Source Credit Agreement by and between Colleton County, South Carolina and a Company Known to the County as Project Quail with Respect to Certain Property Located in the County, Whereby Such Property will be Subject to Certain Payments in Lieu of Taxes, Including the Provision of Certain Special Source Credits; and Other Matters Related Thereto:** Councilman Taylor made a motion to approve the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading of the Ordinance, seconded by Councilman Murdaugh. The motion carried unanimously.
- b. **3rd Reading Ordinance 25-O-12 Authorizing the Amendment of the Agreement for Development for Joint County Industrial Park by and between Colleton County, South Carolina and Charleston County, South Carolina, Providing for the Development of a Jointly Owned and Operated Industrial/Business Park, so as to Include Additional Property Located in Colleton County as Part of the Park; and Other Matters Related Thereto:** Councilman Taylor made a motion to approve the 3<sup>rd</sup> Reading of the Ordinance, seconded by Councilman Murdaugh. The motion carried unanimously.
- c. **3rd Reading Ordinance 25-O-09 to Amend Title 6, Animals, Section 6-04-050 Enforcement, of the Colleton County Code of Ordinance, to Provide Greater Authority to Animal Service Officers:** Councilman Trippe made a motion to approve the ordinance, seconded by Councilman Taylor. Following discussion, Councilman Murdaugh requested that the motion be amended to expand the definition of a dangerous or vicious animal. Councilman Trippe amended his motion accordingly, and the second remained. The motion carried unanimously.

### **New Business**

- a. **Resolution 25-R-72 – To Appoint Members to Board Vacancies:** Council considered a resolution to appoint members to fill vacancies on the Land Use Zoning Board of Appeals. Prior to consideration of the resolution, ballots were distributed to Council and votes were cast. The ballots were collected and tallied by the Clerk to Council, and the tally was verified by Administrator Higgs.

Administrator Higgs announced the results of the ballot. Following the announcement, Councilman Taylor made a motion to approve the resolution appointing the following individuals to the Land Use Zoning Board of Appeals board vacancies:

- Anthony Bunton
- Mark Wysong

The motion was seconded by Councilman Murdaugh. The motion carried unanimously.

**Council Time:** During Council Time, Councilman Taylor discussed the importance of the public understanding the Council meeting process, FILOT agreements, and the Multi-County Industrial/Business Park. He noted his length of service on Council and stated that he strives to respond to citizen requests and questions and to remain accessible to the public.

Councilman Frank commented on his length of residency in Colleton County, the importance of doing what is best for the County, and the need for industry.

Councilman Murdaugh addressed questions raised during the Public Hearing regarding FILOT agreements and discussed economic development and the proposed data center project.

Councilman Trippe stated that he has lived in Colleton County his entire life and that he always strives to do what is best for Colleton County.

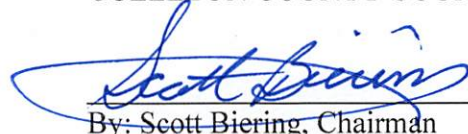
Chairman Biering discussed FILOT agreements and referenced the South Carolina Department of Commerce website as a source of information regarding state incentives provided to economic development projects. He stated that it is his responsibility to protect the quorum of the body and the integrity of the Council's process. He also discussed his commitment to Colleton County, the importance of economic development in providing funding for public services, and the potential financial benefits to the County and local schools associated with the proposed data center project.

Council members expressed their support for the proposed data center currently under consideration.


**Adjournment:** Councilman Frank made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Trippe. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 8:09 p.m.



COLLETON COUNTY COUNCIL

  
By: Scott Biering, Chairman

ATTEST:

  
Martha B. Thompson, Clerk to Council

Approved: 2/9/24



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