COLLETON COUNTY
SOUTH CAROLINA

Colleton County Council Regular Meeting Minutes
Date: September 4, 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: Chairman Biering called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

Roll Call: Chairman Scott Biering, Vice-Chairman Bubba Trippe, Councilman Steve Murdaugh, Councilman Johnny Frank, and Councilman Phillip Taylor were present. Chairman Biering declared a quorum was present.

Invocation & Pledge of Allegiance: Father Bruce Barnett gave the invocation and led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda: Chairman Biering requested a motion to approve the agenda. Vice-Chairman Trippe made a motion to approve the agenda, seconded by Councilman Frank. The motion carried unanimously.

Approval of Minutes: Chairman Biering requested a motion to approve the minutes of the Public Hearing of August 3, 2026, Regular Meeting of August 3, 2026, and Special Called Meeting of August 10, 2026. Councilman Taylor made a motion to approve the minutes, seconded by Councilman Frank. The motion carried unanimously.

Awards and Recognitions:

a. Proclamation Recognizing and Honoring the Members of the South Carolina State Guard and September 2026 as National Preparedness Month: Administrator Higgs presented the Proclamation. Councilman Taylor made a motion to approve the Proclamation, seconded by Vice-Chairman Trippe. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Proclamation Honoring the 200th Anniversary of St. James the Greater Catholic Mission: Chairman Biering presented the Proclamation. Councilman Taylor made a motion to approve the Proclamation, seconded by Councilman Murdaugh. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Proclamation Recognizing September 2026 as National Recovery Month: Chairman Biering presented the Proclamation. Councilman Murdaugh made a motion to approve the Proclamation, seconded by Councilman Frank. Discussion followed. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Frank Santorella spoke about what he described as the positive aspects of data centers. He discussed how data center cooling systems operate and stated that they would not have a harmful impact on the environment.

Lee Petrolawicz spoke about the poverty level in Colleton County and the importance of providing better opportunities for young people so they can remain in the County rather than leaving to seek employment elsewhere. He noted that Colleton County has more than 300,000 acres of protected land within the ACE Basin and encouraged the County to pursue opportunities that would help reduce poverty and create economic opportunities for its residents.

Andrew Fuller spoke about the need for growth in Colleton County. He stated that additional housing is not the answer because it places a strain on County resources and expressed his belief that industrial growth would be more beneficial to the County. He stated that the proposed data center would be a benefit to Colleton County, discussed the regulations data centers are required to follow, and stated that there is an adequate supply of fresh water to support its operations.

Marsha Johnson spoke about the need for greater transparency and asked that additional information be included in Council agendas. She stated that more dialogue is needed between Council and the public and encouraged open discussion of the facts regarding data centers.

Janice Moore thanked Council for their support for the new Edisto Town Hall and for all they do for the betterment of Colleton County.

Adina Harper spoke about the importance of being proactive rather than reactive when planning for growth in the community. She stated that she believes Council is taking steps to proactively plan for the future of Colleton County, including building a professional team of staff and expanding the County's influence within the Lowcountry Council of Governments. She thanked Council for the work they have put into making decisions they believe are in the best interest of the County.

Jeff Jones thanked Council for their support of Veteran's Park.

Willis Ponds stated that he serves on the Colleton County Planning Commission and has closely followed the discussions surrounding the potential data center and the proposed ordinances. He spoke about Council's efforts to ensure that appropriate regulations are in place to protect the citizens and environment of Colleton County. He referenced the County's earlier ordinance addressing data centers and the subsequent moratorium, which he said provided an opportunity for additional research and consideration following public concerns. Mr. Ponds stated that he

believes Council and Administration have done a good job researching the issue and revising the ordinances currently under consideration for second reading.

Administrator's Briefing: Administrator Higgs provided an update on County personnel and organizational changes, including the creation of new positions within the County. He announced the following appointments:

Bryan Bedenbaugh will serve as the Assessor.
Larry Lightsey will serve as the new Director of Public Works.
Aaron Bishop will serve as the new Director of Community Services.
Katrina Douse will serve as the new Deputy Director of Human Resources.
KC Campbell has joined the Administration team as the Director of Public Information, a role he has been fulfilling while also serving with Fire-Rescue. KC will continue to be involved in select Fire-Rescue activities, including Emergency Management.

Old Business

a. Second Reading of an Ordinance Adopting Certain Amendments to the Colleton County Comprehensive Plan 2030: Councilman Murdaugh made a motion to approve the second reading of the Ordinance, seconded by Vice-Chairman Trippe. The motion carried unanimously.

b. Second Reading of an Ordinance (1) Amending the Text of the Zoning Ordinance and Land Development Regulations of Colleton County, South Carolina to Authorize the Establishment of a Digital Infrastructure Overlay District and Establishing Conditions for the Development of Digital Infrastructure Facilities; (2) Repealing and Replacing the Provisions of Ordinance No. 25-O-10 Pertaining to Data Centers; and (3) Other Matters Related Thereto: Councilman Frank made a motion to approve the second reading of the Ordinance, seconded by Councilman Murdaugh. Administrator Higgs read the following statement: The Ordinance contains a provision that allows the Moratorium to remain in effect with respect to all areas of the County east of Interstate I-95 except those zoned industrial until the five-year update to the Colleton County Comprehensive Plan 2030 has been given final approval by Council. The motion carried unanimously.

c. Second Reading of an Ordinance Amending the Colleton County Zoning Map to Designate Areas Included Within the Digital Infrastructure Overlay District and Other Matters Related Thereto: Councilman Murdaugh made a motion to approve the second reading of the Ordinance, seconded by Councilman Frank. The motion carried unanimously.

New Business

a. A Resolution Authorizing the Acceptance of a Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Regional Planning Grant from the South Carolina Department of Commerce in the amount of $50,000 and Authorizing the County Administrator to Execute all Documents Necessary for the Acceptance and Administration of the Grant: Councilman

Murdaugh made a motion to approve the Resolution, seconded by Councilman Frank. The motion carried unanimously.

b. A Resolution to Accept and Adopt the 2026 Lowcountry Region Natural Hazard Mitigation Plan Update, as Required by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA): Vice-Chairman Trippe made a motion to approve the Resolution, seconded by Councilman Frank. The motion carried unanimously.

c. A Resolution to Approve Amendment of the Agreement for Establishment of a Multi-County Business Park, By and Between Charleston County, South Carolina and Colleton County, South Carolina, Providing for the Establishment of a Jointly Owned and Operated Business Park, so as to Include Additional Property in Charleston County as Part of the Multi-County Business Park: Councilman Taylor made a motion to approve the Resolution, seconded by Councilman Murdaugh. The motion carried unanimously.

d. A Resolution Reappointing a Member to the Lowcountry Workforce Development Board: Councilman Frank made a motion to approve the Resolution, seconded by Councilman Taylor. The motion carried unanimously.

e. A Resolution to Appoint Members to Board, Commission, and Committee Vacancies: Council proceeded with the appointment of members to various board, commission, and committee vacancies. Voting was conducted by secret ballot. The Clerk to Council tallied the ballots, and the results were verified by Administrator Higgs. Administrator Higgs announced the results. Based on the results, the following individuals were appointed:

Colleton County Planning Commission: Steven Baker

Councilman Taylor made a motion to accept the results and to approve the Resolution, seconded by Councilman Frank. The motion carried unanimously.

Council Time:

Councilman Steve Murdaugh congratulated Danny Black with the SouthernCarolina Regional Development Alliance on receiving the Order of the Palmetto and recognized the organization's contributions to the community. He then spoke about data centers, acknowledging the differing opinions surrounding them. He stated that Council has made every effort to educate itself on data centers and briefly discussed their history and development. He emphasized that Council must consider the various perspectives and balance those concerns with what is in the best interest of the community as a whole.

Councilman Phillip Taylor stated that he was pleased to see the causeway issues on Edisto Beach being addressed and thanked the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) for its efforts to improve roadway safety.

Vice-Chairman Bubba Trippe thanked Councilman Murdaugh for his service and the work he does as a member of the SouthernCarolina Regional Development Alliance Board.

Executive Session: Chairman Biering requested a motion to go into Executive Session. Councilman Murdaugh made a motion to go into Executive Session to discuss the following topics:

a. Discussion of Personnel Matters Related to the Administrator's Office
b. Receipt of Legal Advice Regarding Contractual Matters Related to the Solicitor's Office
c. Receipt of Legal Advice Regarding Case # 2026-CP-15-00021

The motion was seconded by Councilman Frank. The motion carried unanimously. Council entered into Executive Session at 6:51 p.m.

Public Session: Councilman Taylor made a motion to return to Public Session, seconded by Vice-Chairman Trippe. Council returned to Public Session at 7:48 p.m. Chairman Biering stated that no action was taken during Executive Session.

Adjournment: Chairman Biering requested a motion to adjourn. Councilman Taylor made a motion to adjourn, seconded by Councilman Frank. The motion carried unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 7:49 p.m.

COLLETON COUNTY COUNCIL

By: Scott Biering, Chairman

COLLETON COUNTY SEAL WALTERBORO SC

ATTEST:

Martha B. Thompson, Clerk to Council

Approved: 10/5/26