

MINUTES
MONDAY, OCTOBER 3, 2022
JOINT COUNCIL MEETING
6:00 P.M.

Colleton County Council
Walterboro Wildlife Center
100 S Jefferies Blvd
Walterboro, SC 29488

Colleton County Council

Chairman Steven Murdaugh called the meeting to order with Council Members Phillip Taylor, Dr. Joseph Flowers, and Art Williams in attendance; Gene Whetsell was absent.

Colleton County Sheriff's Office

Sheriff Buddy Hill

Walterboro City Council

Mayor Bill Young and Council Members James Broderick, Judy Bridge, Ladson Fishburne, Paul Siegel, and Carl Brown.

Cottageville Town Council

Mayor Timothy Grimsley and Council Members Andy Sahlmann, and Elizabeth Green.

Edisto Beach Town Council

Mayor Crawford Moore and Councilman Bob Renner.

Colleton County School Board of Directors

Superintendent Vallerie Cave and Board Members Patricia Simmons, Sharon Witkin, Mary Jones, and Harry Jenkins.

Others Included: Kevin Griffin, Kaela Brinson, Deputy Johnson, Susan Keith, Jeff Molinari, Ryan McLeod, Adrienne Nettles, Iris Hill, Mark Aakus, Craig Stivender, Scott Biering, Hiram Davis, Lynn Stroble, Mary Cox, Jacqueline Harvey Brown, Dawn Davis, Charles Davis, Harry Bellinger, Mattie Bellinger, Lillie Singleton, Leila Williams, Silas Ferguson, Frank Santorella, Stewart McAdoo, Clarence Wiggins, Rev. Jack Lewis, Jr., Sandy Nettles, Jessica Williams, Anderson Grant, Janice Young, Charlotte Norwood, Brenda Perkins, and Walter William.

Vice Chairman Phillip Taylor gave the invocation.

Chairman Murdaugh welcomes everyone to the joint meeting.

Public Presentation

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, I would like to thank Councilman Williams who pushed us to get together, it was a good idea. I am going to go through a few items from the county's perspective

and maybe some statistics. I don't know if any of you are gamecock fans or not, but the philosopher Lou Holtz stated that, "Statistics are like a two piece bikini. They can make you look real good or they can make you look real bad, but they never tell the whole story." So, we are going to hit some of the high points, but keep in mind there is a lot that is not in here. The County's fiscal year 2022 assessable property tax base is \$193,167,536 which represented growth of 6.8% from 2021's assessable property tax base of \$180,910,266. This growth in assessed values was driven in part by growth in real property that is a result of the continued high volume of home sales and home refinancing activity due to mortgage rates remaining near historical lows. The home refinancing has led residents to undertake building new homes as well as existing home renovations as seen in the over 1,300 building permits issued that totaled valuation of \$45.3 million. In addition, personal property assessed values saw significant growth based on previously announced business expansions as well as new businesses beginning operations in the County. As reported by the S.C. Revenue and Fiscal affairs office, median household income for the County in 2022 was forecasted at \$44,399 which continues to climb from \$36,139 just five years ago and is now 77% median household income of the State of South Carolina that was reported at \$57,216 also a great improvement over the last five years from when it was less than 70%. The County is continuing to rebound from the economic impact incurred from COVID-19 during fiscal year 2020. It is hard to have a meeting anymore without hearing the word COVID-19, but it still continues to have an impact on the municipalities and the county. This rebound is evidenced by the reduction in County unemployment which was 4.7% as of June 2021 as compared to 8.2% as of June 2020. Unemployment in the County is now roughly the same as the rate for South Carolina of 3.5% and slightly better than the U.S. rate of 3.7%. The rebound was also seen in the growth in retail sales which increased by over 9% for the year and drove increases in collection of 1% local option taxes, 1% capital projects taxes, and 2% local hospitality taxes. The County continues to invest time and resources in the development of three major County industrial sites. The sites are the Colleton Mega Site, the Stokes Tract, and the Colleton Industrial Campus. Both the Colleton Mega Site and the Stokes Tract are key industrial sites to support the financing undertaken in 2017 related to the purchase of the Salkehatchie Railroad along with Palmetto Railways, a division of S.C. Commerce. On this Economic Development front, Gehl Foods Southeast announced the purchase of Crescent Dairy and on Spec Building II for a large manufacturing distribution of shelf stable milk products and sports drinks. This project will bring \$44 million in new investment and 106 new jobs to the Colleton County Commerce Center. Mr. Jason Krause, Manager, says to let everyone know that Gehl is now hiring. The last of projects approved by voters with the Capital Projects Sales Tax got underway during the last quarter of fiscal year 2021-2022. These projects include the final phase of the City of Walterboro I-95 business loop which was undertaken to rehab and provide appeal to the Jefferies Blvd/Bells Highway span between exits 53 and 57 on I-95 to attract more visitors and tourists to the historic downtown of Walterboro. In addition to this project, the new Colleton County Taxpayer Service Center (Floyd Buckner Building) is complete and opened Friday. This building is being constructed to house the offices of the Treasurer, the Auditor and Delinquent Tax. The building will provide a more streamlined and efficient manner for residents to access these offices and even now offers a drive thru window for payments. At the same time of this construction, the current office building, the Harrelson Building, is undergoing planning and design to reengineer this building to allow for better access by residents to the offices of the Assessor, Planning and Development, Register of Deeds and Human Resources and complete a new County IT server room for all County IT needs. Also completed in the last month is the construction of a central parking area for visitors to the various County offices. This was the

County’s last major 2014 Capital Project Sales Tax projects. With the 2014 Capital Project Sales Tax program nearing completion, the County Council just voted to put another 1 cent Capital Project Sales Tax on the ballot for November 2022. Those projects are listed as:

No.	<u>Project Description</u>	<u>Amount</u>
1	Colleton County Animal Services Facility	\$ 3,330,550.00
2	Veteran's Park	\$ 988,200.00
3	Town of Smoaks - Johnsville/Smoaks Community Center	\$ 937,000.00
4	Colleton County Emergency Operations Center	\$ 2,719,185.00
5	Colleton County Recreation Center Additions (New Gym and Activity Rooms)	\$ 2,953,575.00
6	Colleton County Recreation Center Additions (Pool Facility)	\$ 2,029,690.00
7	Town of Cottageville - Park Expansion	\$ 455,000.00
8	Town of Williams - Water Infrastructure Improvements	\$ 250,000.00
9	City of Walterboro - I-95 Business Loop Project Phase 3	\$ 6,802,045.00
10	Edisto Municipal EOC and Town Hall Complex Phase 1	\$ 10,000,000.00
11	City of Walterboro - Ireland Creek Greenway Park and Stream Restoration	\$ 9,889,816.00
	Total Amount of Sales and Use Tax Proceeds for All Capital Projects	\$ 40,355,061.00

Litter is always a problem in the county. As part of County Council’s initiative to keep Colleton Beautiful, as of September 1, 2022, the County litter program has picked up 340.76 miles in the County totaling 26.95 tons. The County is now adding two cameras to our litter program which will be going up in a few weeks in some of the high litter areas to help catch repeat offenders. If you have a specific area you would like for us to focus on, please let us know. Fire-Rescue hosted the first “Mile in our Boots” training for mental health clinicians who treat Public Safety Personnel. The three-day course allowed the clinicians the opportunity to experience what their clients do for a living. They learned about work schedules, how to wear and work in Firefighter gear, search a building, carry victims, respond to high stress incidents, etc. It was an eye opener for most of them and there were many positive comments from participants. Fire Prevention Education began this week in the schools and will run throughout the month of October. Lastly, if you have been to any of the recent county council meetings, you have noticed that the county has been having some issues with some businesses. We have had lots of trouble, and it is difficult for law enforcement to enforce those things. So, county council has now began to initiate a county wide business license. This is a business license registration so, is not a fee based on income. It will be a set registration fee depending on the type of business that you operate. We hope to have that initiated soon so that we can assist law enforcement with those businesses that are not following the rules. Again, I wanted to say this was just to hit some of the highlights. That is not to say that Colleton County does not have struggles just like all municipalities. The state of the economy is in influx so, that means interest rates are on the rise. There are a lot of unforeseen things in the future that we are going to have to encounter, but we are in a good position financially so we should be able to make it through those things.

At this time I am going to ask that the municipalities, school board, and Sheriff to come up and speak in the order that it is on the agenda.

Sheriff Hill: Stated, thank you all for having us tonight. I would like to touch on what Chairman Murdaugh just spoke on, business licenses' for the county. The Sheriff's office supports this, because it is going to give us the authority to shut down some of the nuisance businesses that we have had over the years. I have been in and about Colleton County law enforcement since 1986, and this has been an ongoing problem for many years. I think that having the ability to record the instances and being able to look at taking the business license or having some sort of fine that we can give to keep this in check. As it stands right now, if they have an alcohol license, the state can come in and they can assist us, but in some of these instances that is not the case, it is a bring your own and the business license would help with that. I would like to say this past week, as you all know, we dodged a bullet with the storm, but I would like to thank the community for heading our warnings. Of course law enforcement were out and about, and traffic was very limited. People listened to the warnings and stayed home, and we really appreciate that. Speaking on hiring, like Gehl foods, we also have vacancies within law enforcement, detention, and communications. So, if you know anyone that would fit those needs, please send them our way.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, thank you Sheriff. Next on the list we have Mayor Young of the City of Walterboro, which according to the US City's Statistics has a population of 5,398. That doesn't seem right, but you also have 832.2 residents per square mile.

Mayor Young: Stated, City Council has approved a lot of projects that are either underway or will be soon. The city manager and city staff are diligently working on those projects, and have done an excellent job on getting grants in order to get those projects completed. I want to take just a minute and go through the things that we have going on right now. Boardwalk Replacement – Design and engineering has begun on the boardwalk replacement project, the city has over \$2.4 million in place for the project including a \$2.1 million revenue bond, a \$200,000 Undiscovered SC grant and \$113,513 from tornado recovery funds. I-95 Business Loop Project Phase 2 – Project is underway and will be completed by the end of 2022. Project will extend from I-95 exit 53 to the intersection of Jefferies Blvd./Bells Highway and will include decorative mast arms, medians, lighting, landscaping, stamped asphalt crosswalks, and milling and resurfacing. Water/Sewer Projects (CDBG) – the city currently has three (3) active CDBG projects including the East Side Water Line (nearing closeout), Black Street Sewer Subsystem (under construction), and Subsystem 1 and 3 East (under construction). SCIIP Application – As part of the South Carolina Infrastructure Investment Program (SCIIP), the city applied to RIA to construct a sewer trunk line to exit 57 from Ireland Creek and to extend sewer service into Northwest Walterboro. The total anticipated project cost is \$11,773,510. Main Street SC Application – the city applied to the Municipal Association of South Carolina Main Street SC program, a rigorous technical assistance program that will help to bolster downtown Walterboro. Ireland Creek Greenway Park and Stream Restoration – the project will create a new public space along Ireland Creek from West Washington Street to North Jefferies Blvd., including greenways, day-use areas, and trails. The Greenway will provide a park setting connecting downtown Walterboro and shopping areas with the Walterboro Wildlife Sanctuary. I-95 Business Loop Project Phase 3 – the final phase of the I-95 Business Loop project will extend from the intersection of North Jefferies Blvd. and Bells Highway to Exit 57. The project will include decorative mast arms, medians, lighting, landscaping, stamped asphalt crosswalks, and milling and resurfacing. The projected cost is \$6,802,045. WWTP Expansion (\$15.6 million EDA grant) – this project will expand capacity of the city's wastewater treatment plant from 2.64 MGD to 5.5 MGD. The total estimated cost of the project is \$20 million, and

construction will begin next year. Lower & Middle Ireland Creek Sewer Trunk Line Improvement Project - Upgrade sewer trunk line from WWTP to West Washington Street. The city was awarded a \$3.3 million grant from EDA for the project. The total projected cost is \$4,071,876. The City of Walterboro received the Government Finance Officers Association (GFOA) Award for Excellence in Financial Reporting for the 10th consecutive year. Water Tower Park – construction of a passive park that will feature the old water tower in downtown Walterboro (site of the former Strickland Cleaner’s). Walterboro Wildlife Center Programming (Director of Tourism and Downtown Development, Scott Grooms) – the city hired a new Tourism Director and modified the job description to include more of a focus on downtown redevelopment. The new Director will also be tasked with attracting entertainment to the Wildlife Center to include concerts in the amphitheater and wildlife shows and live exhibits. Thank you.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, I would like to thank you for allowing us to have this joint meeting at the Wildlife Center tonight. At this time I would like to ask the Mayor of Cottageville, Mayor Grimsley, to come forward.

Mayor Grimsley: Stated, for those of you who do not know me I am Timothy Grimsley, the Mayor of Cottageville. I have been Mayor there for 8 years, we have got a lot done, but I sure got a lot more that we need to get done. My main concern and goal is to get water and sewer in our community. If we cannot get water or sewer, we cannot have any industry. We cannot get a grocery store or restaurant, and as you all know it is a major undertaking. It looks like the only thing that we can do is “piggy back” off of the existing system. Mayor Young, I may be contacting you about that in the future. There are no more permits being issued for discharge water coming from the Edisto River, so the only way we will be able to accomplish this is to “piggy back” off an existing system. As far as the 1% CPST, we submitted for a park extension. The park that we built a few years ago is doing extremely well and is being used daily. The playground equipment is already getting worn out because the kids are using it a lot. We are hoping that the park expansion is going to double the size of our park. We would like to add an open stage area. The area we are looking at doing that is a very low area. It had some seagulls, believe it or not. They are occurring around a drainage system that was put there many years ago. We are going to try to fill that in and grade it out. I would also like to add that there is nothing available in Cottageville for the children. I have raised my children there, and we need something. The playground is being used greatly, but I would like to be able to install a small splash pad for the little kids. Our playground equipment is not suitable for the toddler aged children, so we would like to expand our playground to include things that they can play on and that new moms can push their infants in. We need some security improvements with cameras. We get a good bit of vandalism. It is nothing major just primarily writing on the pavilion walls, and the bathrooms are constantly having to be up kept. We were on Tik Tok one time. Apparently there was a Tik Tok trend on destroying a bathroom, and one of our office workers happened to see it, so we were able to catch the individual who did that. So we do need that increase in security in the form of cameras. We have contracted with a company to pave our parking lot, which is in horrible condition, but now they will not answer their phones. So, we are trying to work on figuring that out. The last thing I want to say is that Cottageville is very well known, nationally known to be specific. If you Google Cottageville, the first thing that comes up is speed trap. I am not kidding, go home and Google Cottageville. Now, that is not true. I have limited my police officers and if you’re doing 15 over you are going to get pulled. We are trying to get away from that to make Cottageville a destination, not just a drive through. As you all are

aware, 17-A is a major highway with a lot of tourist and such driving right through. We really need to work on making Cottageville a destination and I will take suggestions from anyone. We are looking for grants to upgrade our office building because it is getting in pretty bad shape.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, thank you Mayor. We will now hear from Mayor Crawford Moore from Edisto Beach, who thankfully weathered the storm fairly good.

Mayor Moore: Stated, thank you Steve. I appreciate the opportunity to be here with you all tonight. I am going to start off with some information most of you already know but wanted to explain where we are in our long-term plan for Edisto Beach on pressing issues. First, I would like to thank County Council for our ongoing positive relationship we have shared for many, many years. We have worked well with council and with your staff and we value that relationship greatly. We also want to thank you for your approval of the referendum for this upcoming election in November. It will benefit all of Colleton County. As you know, as a state Hwy, 174 carries all of the traffic to Edisto Beach and is also the front beach road that extends all the way down the beach to the area where the sound meets Big Bay Creek. This road is a public road and is, as it should be, for public use and is used by travelers and vacationers from all over the country and the world. Parking is free, as it should be. That being said, we need to understand that although it does belong to the public, it is our responsibility to police and take care of it. We partner with Colleton County in those policing efforts, and as always appreciate that partnership greatly. Also, as you know, the front beach is our “economic development park” for lack of a better term. In the summer your beach can be filled with as many as 25,000 visitors, not to mention the one half million visitors the State Park gets each year. As is the highway, the beach does not belong to Edisto Beach, it belongs to the public for public use by anyone. We get visitors from all over the country on a regular basis: Ohio, NJ, NY, Vermont, Connecticut, Maine, Tennessee, Texas, Georgia, Alabama, Kentucky, NC, Virginia, just to name a few. I have also seen license plates from Oregon, Washington and California. The Beach at Edisto is utilized and enjoyed by people from all over this country. This is not to mention the regular visitors we service from Summerville, Charleston, Mt. Pleasant, Walterboro, and the other surrounding towns and cities. We have become a national vacation destination. The economic impacts of this public beach to the towns and to Colleton County are essential to our ongoing success. Our challenges are beachfront maintenance among other issues, but beach front management is our elephant in the room. The perception is that because the name Edisto is followed by the word “beach” that we are somehow considered an economic powerhouse. Unfortunately, that is not true. When you look to the likes of other beaches in SC, we fall desperately short. Edisto Beach does not have the financial resources that the likes of Hilton Head, Myrtle Beach, Isle of Palms, Folly Beach or any other SC beach community. We don’t have high rise hotels for multiple layers of people occupying the same small piece of real estate, high rise condos or any of the amenities that these communities have, that create the type of tax base that they can carry. Our budget is a fraction of any of these beach front areas. At 7.2m annually our budget is lower than Colleton County towns; like Walterboro and many other South Carolina towns. Maintaining a beach front community has its very special challenges. Water, drainage, sewer, beach access maintenance, road maintenance and the big one is always Beach front management. Just because our budgets are a fraction of other beach front communities, our cost to maintain these public beaches are just as expensive as theirs. With the public aspect of Palmetto Blvd/174 and the beach front itself and all 38 beach accesses, Edisto Beach is still responsible for their maintenance, policing, turtle patrols, cleaning, and storm damage repairs, all of which are

taxing on our annual budget. We are working with the Army Corp of Engineers for an ongoing beach nourishment contract which should be ready very soon. This contract will provide us full repairs of the beach in the likelihood that a storm damages it. Our challenge going forward will be normal beach nourishment projects. If we do not do our nourishments as necessary, the beach will wash away and the loss of valuable real estate and tax income will negatively affect not only Edisto Beach but also Colleton County and the state of SC. Our deal with the Corp. in regard to regular maintenance is a 65-35 percent share. This means we must come up with 35 percent of the cost of regular nourishment. The upcoming project is projected to cost around 22 million dollars, our share of that is approximately 7.5 million. As with any project, the cost is usually higher than expected. So, ever since Hurricane Matthew, the Town has been putting back approximately \$200,000 annually, from our budget, in order to be prepared for this expense. These are monies that we need in other infrastructure areas particularly in areas of drainage and sewer, but we have prioritized this money for the public beach front nourishment. We consider it that critical to the future of not only Edisto Beach but also Colleton County. But unfortunately, it's not enough. Fortunately for all of us, the state has seen to it to help us out with a one-time commitment to our next nourishment project which is right around the corner. Our concern is for future nourishments, so to be able to maintain this public use area for years to come. Not only for the benefit of our public, but also for Edisto Beach and Colleton County. As I mentioned before, the Town of Edisto Beach has committed to putting back a substantial part of our annual budget so to be prepared, when the time comes, to nourish again, usually in the 12-to-16-year time frame, and we will continue to do that. What we would like to ask is that Council consider also investing into the ongoing protection of our greatest financial asset here in Colleton County. We would like to ask that the county consider committing, just as we have, to putting back an annual financial line item to your budget that would be earmarked specifically for beach front nourishment. It would be a strong return on your investment. I cannot express how important maintaining the beach front is to the financial stability of Colleton County and Edisto Beach. You know this, as do I, and I believe that the surrounding communities know it also. I would ask that Council consider starting a conversation around the possibility of moving forward with just such a commitment. These needed regular nourishments are not going away and will be increasingly difficult for Edisto Beach to handle alone. Once again, thank you for your continued support of our town and the great relationship we have had for many years.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, thank you Mayor Moore. Do we have anyone here from the Town of Lodge, the Town of Smoaks, or the Town of Williams? Hearing no one, I am going to ask for the Superintendent of Education for Colleton County, Dr. Vallerie Cave.

Superintendent Cave: Stated, thank you for the opportunity to tell you a little bit about the greatest place that I have found to work, Colleton County School District. Our vision for Colleton County School District is to prepare every child today for tomorrow, and that is what we try to do each and every day. Our theme this year is progress forever, backwards never. CCSD currently has about 5100 students, 820 Employees, 11 school sites, with an operating budget of 52 Million dollars for this year. Also, we currently have 13 vacancies. We have provided our employees with a raise this year to all our certified, classified, and administrators. Our vision is to prepare our children, and we do that to make sure they can be employed. There are only four things that children should be able to do in this world; to be employed, enlisted, enrolled, and to be entrepreneurs. Those are the choices that they have in this life, because being a drop out is not one

of those choices. How we do that is through partnerships, safe and secure learning, programming, academic progress, and the path forward, which I will be telling you more about. Our partnerships to name a few, artsNow, colleges & universities, businesses, non-profit organizations, and corporate sponsorships. Not only do we have partnerships, we have safe and secure learning. Of course, we will have those day to day struggles with children providing misbehaviors, but we do things like provide metal detectors, clear book bags, random administrative screenings, updated camera system, updated crisis management system, mindset training, gang awareness training, mental health counselors, and Social Workers. We have partnerships with MUSC so our children can have telehealth therapy, as well as, partnerships with Fetter Health Care and so to be Genesis Health Care. Also, some facility upgrades we have done is new playgrounds and new roofing on many facilities. We have also provided some paving starting today. We continue to provide those facility upgrades for our children to be safe and secure. Programming, children can have opportunities for great futures when you upgrade programming within the school. So, we have expanded our career and technology programs by offering HVAC. That will soon begin in January. We have our arts integration in our early childhood center, a drone program that will be at our middle school, we have e-sports, and we are getting ready to do our STEM reveal at two of our STEM labs, cyber security class, open courts learning program, super tutors, and parenting programs. Let's talk about our academic progress. We have intense professional development opportunities for Leaders and teachers, teacher recruitment and retention, positive growth between the school years 2021-2022 and 2020-2021 in all content areas for end of course in high school, positive growth in all content areas for grades three, five, six, seven and eight on SCREADY and SCPASS. Now, the path forward, some do not like to hear about this and some do, but it will carry us to success. We are providing aggressive monitoring of academic improvement, a modified school calendar, hoping to create the 6th grade academy, build a new early childhood center, a new TCTC facility, to expand the early college program, create a teacher leadership academy, teacher advisory council, a community advisory board, parents as partners groups. So, I continue to provide a quality learning environment for our teacher, students, and parents so that we have progress forever and not move backwards. Thank you for the opportunity to be here.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, at this time we have been through all present municipalities and the school board, so I am going to open it up to public questions and comments. I ask that you please come forward and speak into the mic, so that we can all hear you.

Public Comment

Rev. Lewis: Stated, he stands here today to thank Councilman Williams and Council for bringing this meeting together. First, I would like to ask, what you are doing to improve the City of Walterboro and Colleton County. What major businesses are you bringing here, not just "ma and pa"? The "ma and pa" businesses that hire two and three people are here, but the major businesses who would hire 200-300 are not coming here. I listen to the Mayor and all the projects are great, but what about the projects in impoverished neighborhoods and the African American community? What about the projects there? Why aren't there anything going on over there? Now, that is City and County Council. That is my issue, but not only that. Does the Sheriff's Department have community policing? Do you have deputies' assigned to different neighborhoods so, that they can get to know the people in the community, and the people in the communities get to know the deputies? Also, the city police department. As far as the School Board is concerned...and I am

going to put it where the ghosts can get it... Most of you who know me know that I am very outspoken. The issue is with the School Board...I listen to Dr. Cave, I have been in Colleton County for fourteen years. Dr. Cave has a tremendous program for the school board, but the only problem is, and I am going to end on this Dr. Cave does not look like the majority of you sitting there. Thank you.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, I will attempt to answer from the county's perspective as it relates to what we are trying to do to improve the county. The biggest thing you can do to improve the county is to create jobs, economic development is the tide that raises all ships. I did hit on some of that. We have three parks we are trying to develop, the railroad system that is now in place, and we do have two projects that are looking at those things. Some of those we are not at the liberty to talk about because they have not officially announced or done anything, but let me say this. Are we going to recruit a BMW to come to Colleton County right now? No, we are not. The reason we are not is because work force, and we don't have the workforce to support it. Work force development is a priority. We have been working with the technical colleges, the school, and we build the facility out in the industrial area, but the fact of the matter is we don't have the work force to support a large plant or facility like that. So, by putting in a plant or facility like that that will create 100 jobs or 120 jobs in Colleton County that is a big impact. We have to focus on what we can get. If you go out and focus all your time and effort on a project that we know we will never be in the running for, to me that is a waste of our time and our resources. We are trying to improve the workforce at the same time as we are trying to improve economic development. As far as what is going on in the county, I know there has been a lot of discussion about the kids and youth not having anything to do in this county. We do have some things in the Capital Project Sales Tax referendum. Since I have been on council all I have heard is we need a pool, we need a pool. If Mr. Buckner were here tonight he would be able to tell you the same thing. He was one who pushed and pushed for a swimming pool in this county, and we are finally getting a swimming pool on this referendum. I know there may be some disagreement....

Rev. Lewis: Stated, I hate to interrupt, but a swimming pool does not bring any jobs.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, I agree with you.

Rev. Lewis: Stated, but if you build it they will come. So, if you bring businesses in, people will come and they will bring people with them.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, I understand that, but your question touched on several different things not just that you were talking about not having opportunities and things to do in the county and how we were going to improve that. To go back, then I am going to let the Mayor and whoever else would like to speak here, economic development and work force development are the two most important things we need to do, and we certainly have limitations in those. You said you were going to be straight and I am going to shoot straight with you to. We are not going to get a BMW, we don't have the workforce to support that, but we do have the workforce to support a facility that will create 120 jobs, like Gehl Foods. Those create jobs, and for somebody who does not have a job, that is a good job. They also have benefits, which is something that is lacking in this county. So, I do think councils' are trying and working together to do that, but it is going to take all the organizations to do their jobs before we are going to get the improvements.

Mayor Young: Stated, just about every one of the projects that I presented to you tonight impact economic development. They are designed to bring businesses into Walterboro. The I-95 Loop Project is designed to bring people in off I-95. Several of the sewer and water projects are in low income areas within the city and some are just outside of the city that we had received grants to put in within the low income areas. I would just disagree with what you said about that. Growth does happen fast enough to suit people. We don't like to see things just busting loose and I don't think we are far from that happening. All of these things, the sewer, the increase in the waste water treatment plant, the sewer lines are all tied into the county's recruitment for bigger industries and better jobs. All those things have to be in place before that happens, so we are trying to build it so that they will come.

Dr. Cave: Stated, the school district is working to expand all our offerings to our children so that we can make sure we prove a good work force, because you need to have an abled bodied work force. The children will be ready to take the jobs when the businesses get here. Our goal is to get the children ready so that they are ready to take the jobs.

Sheriff Hill: Stated, we do have deputies that are assigned to zones. Of course, as you all know Colleton County is a big county. We do as much as we can as far as those deputies staying in their zone. As I stated earlier, we are shorthanded as are most of the counties in the state. We do have a community officer who is dedicated to going to the different areas of the county and meeting with people. So far this year we have participated in 26 community events, and 13 more scheduled that we will participate in. We have attended 12 community meetings and conducted 12 active shooter seminars for churches and different groups. We are doing as much as we can to interact with the community, because that is vital to the wellbeing of the county.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, are there any further comments.

***Next citizen came to the podium to speak.

Ms. Leila Williams: Stated, I wanted to say to the Mayor and to Council, thank you so much for thinking about beautifying Colleton County and all of the improvements you are making. As I travel around the states I like to take the time to drive through small towns just to look and see how they appear. So, I am happy to hear of your efforts for beautification. However, there is one small concern that I have. Fortunately, I am very mobile. I walk and ride my bicycle, but I happen to have several counter parts and several agencies that I am involved with and they have citizens that either walk with walker, sticks, or are in wheel chairs. In your efforts to beautify, there have been several light posts that have been put in the middle of sidewalks so, when these persons are in their wheel chairs and they get to that point, they have no choice but to hopefully have someone to assist them to get down onto the highway and get back up on to the side walk. In addition to those light posts, we have some beautiful palm trees that have been planted. However, here again they are in the middle of the side walk. So, I ask that in your future efforts to beautify, to please think of all of our populations, because within Colleton County we do have a disabled population and those things do make it difficult for them to maneuver. Of course, we know it is not everywhere and every day, but if it effects one person negatively, then it is something that we need to consider. I would also ask that those light posts and trees that have already been placed as you are doing your planning if there is someone on board that could look at those to see what could be done to

make some changes so that it will not negatively impact our disabled population which you know if so near and dear to my heart. I would be so appreciative as would those citizens and their families, thank you so much.

Mr. Grant: Stated, We appreciate the opportunity to come before you all and for council making this happen tonight. As Ms. Williams and others have said, we still have a long way to go in this community. This is one step for some transparency for lack of a better word. In Colleton County we live in an information dessert. In a meeting of this importance I see no press.

***A Press and Standard publishers states that she is there.

Mr. Grant: Stated, thank you for being here. I have attended several meetings at different levels and there has been no press at all. Normally it is two weeks after the meeting before some information is put out, and sometimes that information is not correct. I am here right now with concerns on the 1% sales tax referendum. I know you are fighting to get it passed because there are some good projects on it, but I believe the process coming up to this referendum...that the full community has not been involved. The project was tabled and then brought back to the table and swept through so quickly that a lot of Colleton County residents still don't understand what this referendum is all about. I think that the committee that was charged with reviewing those different projects and reporting back to council may have done a very good job, but I do not think they listen to the entire community when they made their report. So, this is the concerns that I have. Let's be clear and not white wash anything. Let's let the facts be facts and let your yays be yays and your neighs be neighs.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, Thank you Mr. Grant. Are there any more comments?

Rev. Bellinger: Stated, I have lived in Colleton County since 2003. Spending 30 years in the Federal government in Washington D.C., safety is one of my top priorities. Now, living in Roadside. I live right on Highway 17 and like I said, safety is a high priority to me. I travel Highway 17 daily, and I think that is one of the most unsafe highways we have here in Colleton County. We get all the traffic that comes off I-95 when there is an accident, we can hardly get on that highway. That highway is very unsafe especially in rainy weather. As I drive through the county and see other highways that have been repaved and resurfaced and they were nowhere near as bad as highway 17A. Can someone kind of give me a general idea that we are on the list of re-pavement soon or what is going to happen there?

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, I can answer from my perspective and understanding, which may not be accurate, the transportation committee is appointed by the Legislative Delegation, which is comprised of the senators and the house members that represent Colleton County, they appoint a committee called the Colleton County Transportation Committee. Their funding primarily comes from the fuel tax you pay when you go to the gas station on your fuel. That committee is charged with, along with the representative from the state, prioritizing the re-pavement. I do not profess to be an expert on what the transportation committee does at all. There is probably a list somewhere of the roads they have set as priority. That does that mean that wouldn't change if there was some sort of emergency. For example, if a bridge could no longer support trucks and such that could reprioritize the list. That is my understanding, but I am not on that committee. That list should be

maintained somewhere by CTC Committee. We will try to get you the name of the Chairman of that committee and they should reach out to you.

Mr. Ed Williams: Stated, I serve on that committee and every month we ask the state what their plan is on fixing that road. They first told us they were going to start it in June and now it has gone to January. They are supposed to fix it from the river to Walterboro within the next two years. I have also been told they are having problems getting the concrete and that the state has sent people to India and Pakistan. So, that is where we are with things. The transportation committee does not handle highways. We basically work with dirt roads and rocking and some improvements to county owned roads. ***Inaudible.

Ms. Brenda Perkins: Stated, while you are talking about county roads and such, we have a road in the Pine area that has not been resurfaced. They came and threw rock on the road and it is flying and hitting cars. So, we have several pot holes on Pine Hill Road close to Clover Hill road, so tell the committee Pine Hill road. We are thankful for the traffic signs, but we need the road repaired so it won't tear up our cars. One more thing I would like to say and I need to ask this question, I left South Carolina in 1998 and went to Florida. When I came back to Walterboro, South Carolina it was like stepping out of a time capsule back to the 30s, 40s, and 50s. We have not grown, and I thank you for the progress and for the re-paved roads. I thank you for all those things, but it seems like it takes so long for us to get from one point in Colleton County to the next point, and I don't know how we can get around that. We need to move forward. We need to move forward. As far as our Sheriff's Department, you all are doing a fine job. I sit on my front porch and I see your deputies riding down Pine Road. We are doing a wonderful job with our schools, but we need more. Especially in the Green Pond area. We heard about the new center that is going on the Ivenia Brown site. They tore down the building and we are still looking. We have not seen that yet. Some of our parents have a car and are able to transport their children to the beautiful baseball field, but some of our children can't get all the way out there. We need something in the Green Pond area. That has been on the agenda and has not come to pass yet. So, we would like something out there. If we are going to build and be in partnership with our schools then we need that. I would like to know a time frame on that. I heard that it will only be open at certain times and for certain events, and our children come first. If we don't give to our children our community is going to die.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, I agree with everything that you said. Mr. Ed keep taking all the concrete so we don't have any concrete.

Mr. Ed Williams: Stated, the Legislative Delegation is supposed to meet on Wednesday night at 6:00 PM.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, I will say one of the issues that Colleton County has had forever is that Colleton County is sort of like the sacrificial lamb when it comes to reapportionment. We haven't had a resident representative and we finally have a resident relative Senator, Senator Matthews. The result of that is we did get some funding and built a community center, and we have others on the list. Hopefully, that message will get through the rest of delegation and they will assist her with trying to get that funding. That is the only way the county can try and jump in and match that is with some help from the state. We are getting some help from the state now. It is still difficult because we do not have a representative from this county that represents the

majority of this county. The problem with that is when they get to Columbia they are going to look out for the base of their support which not in this county. Senator Matthews would be the exception, because she lives in this county. That is a problem unfortunately we can't do anything about, because every year we try, we push, we attempt, County Council, the Mayor, we all go to the meetings and try to get the reapportionment maps drawn to put more of Colleton in one district. Unfortunately we have not made a lot of progress on that. That is one of the results with this trying to get funding out of the state. Fortunately we have a resident Senator now, and we really should have a resident House member in the House of Representative up in Columbia. I agree we need more for the children. Even back to your comment, one of the problems that Colleton County has, which is a problem, but also our biggest asset, we are a huge county geographically. We also have rivers, streams, and the ace basin. We have a lot of assets that are natural beauties. They are not heavily populated at all, and they are difficult to maintain all those things. One of the problems with creating jobs is getting our kids to want to come back to this county. I have four kids and as soon as they graduated the first thing that they say is, I want to get out of Colleton County. Of course I was in agreement initially because I thought they were going to get off my payroll. If I am still giving them money and they are somewhere else, then they need to be here. We have got to change the mind set with our kids. The only way we are going to be able to do that is creating jobs. Most kids get out of high school and they don't go to college. We need to have jobs available to them where they can raise and support their families. That is why I think the emphasis on my part should be on economic development and creating jobs because that is how we are going to fix the problem. Are there any other questions?

Mr. Charles Davis: Stated, My question is for the Sheriff's Office and the City. Could you address the incident that happened with the Tuskegee Airman Monument that was damaged?

Sheriff Hill: Stated, the landscape company accidentally backed into it and knocked it over. The Mayor may be able to answer this better than I can, but it was not intentional.

Mayor Young: Stated, It was not intentional, we are in the process of getting the people responsible to notify their insurance companies and get all of that done.

Mr. Davis: Stated, Is he contracted through the city to do the landscaping?

Mayor Young: Stated, he is contracted through the county and I believe that particular parcel is through the county and he does all of the airport.

Inaudible discussion of multiple people.

Mayor Young: Stated, you are right he should not have been in there with his mower. We tried to figure out why he would do that and someone said he would use the lawn mower to blow off grass and leaves from the monument.

Mr. Davis: Stated, they need to look for someone else...he should have used something designed to do that...inaudible... I only see one landscaping company, Ackerman.

Mayor Young: Stated, we were thankful to find out that it was an accident and no one was being mean.

Mr. Davis: Stated, that needs to be published because a lot of people think otherwise.

Mayor Young: Stated, I am not sure how that got out, but that was my first thought when I saw that it was knocked down, but we investigated it a little bit more and looked at our surveillance and where able to determine how it happened.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, I just received an update on the Ivenia Brown center. The design is done, we are just waiting on the funding to come in...maybe it will within the next month or so. Are there any other comments or questions?

Public Comment (Unknown due to inaudible recording) Rev. from the Yemassee area: I want to thank you, Sheriff, for instituting that program...inaudible (door opening and shutting)...we have the ace basin community development center and we have an officer that is coming out there periodically and checking with us on what they can do to help. I want to thank you for that with us being in such a rural area. Dr. Cave I was very impressed with your presentation, you are doing a great job. To the Mayor of Edisto Beach, you all seem to have a major problem with sewer. Have you all come together and looked at tapping into the infrastructure?

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, we have looked into the infrastructure money. The problem is they only allocate so much, and we have to use what we do have for economic development. Now the county does have water and sewer authority. It was on the referendum, I can't recall how many years ago. They may be a conversation that we need to engage in with the Town of Cottageville. Which I believe the Town of Cottageville has more problem with that than Edisto as far as that goes.

Rev.: The key thing with what you said in Cottageville area. That infrastructure is the key to bringing in businesses and you can't do that without it. I think that should be a top priority with the council members.

Chairman Murdaugh: Are there any other comments?

Mr. Ed Williams: Stated, I serve as the President of the NAACP, my question to County Council is, you said that we do not have the people to do the work...inaudible. When is County Council going to decide that they are going to either give the school district more money and get children in place for workforce or keep struggling....inaudible.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, in my personal opinion, the issues with the physical autonomy should be left to the citizens, not the council. Even at the state level I don't know what they have done. I feel like physical autonomy should be voted on by the citizens, not by an elected body. What the county does when we focus on workforce development is after high school. The school system that is their job to prepare the children up until that point. As far as money and funding, the school board didn't come before us this year for request. I guess the short answer is that they did not ask for money, you are not going to get it if you didn't ask for it.

Russell (Inaudible last name): Stated, when most people see me they don't realize that I march on the band with Mayor Young. It has saved me a couple times. The Sheriff pulled up to the house just the other day. They said they were looking for Russell, he robbed a bank. I said, "Wait a minute it couldn't be me." They said, "Yeah you match the description." I said I marched in the band with mayor Young. What is funny about it is so did Senator Bright, she marched on the band with us also. When I met Mr. Young it was 1973 and I was in the 10th grade. I walked into the band room and said I want to play drums. He replied, "Most of these kids have been playing since elementary school." He put me in front of the band with the drum and that day I joined the band. I wanted to thank you, because he did not have to bring me onto the band because I didn't know how to read music but he knew I was talented. The reason I got up here is because I became a drummer only because there was a Library and a Rec Center in the neighborhood I grew up in and I was able to walk from one to the other without transportation. So, when I heard the issue that the rec center was going to be built out in the industrial center, I thought if you could build it near the Library you will have people that could develop skills the way I did. This way 9-10 year olds can ride their bikes from the City to the Rec center and to the Library. This is my plea to help develop kids by having facility close enough that they can ride their bikes to. I am with the NAACP Economic Development Council. If we ever have a drought, we are going to be in trouble. When we have storms and all the trees fall, they do not move them away, they only move them to the side and if you have to quickly come to the shoulder of the road, there will be an accident. If we could get someone to remove them from the shoulder, because that is dangerous. Oh, and there is no body in my neighborhood trying to defund the police. Thank you.

The school board stated that they will be in contact about funding.

Chairman Murdaugh: Stated, one thing the county has tried to put in place is transportation. I realize what you are saying about location and being able to ride your bike, but that still doesn't help the kids in Green Pond, Lodge, or Cottageville. We are still going to have some short fall there and we will have transportation needs if we are going to get these kids to the different community centers or recreation centers. Again, I want to thank everyone for coming. I think this has been positive and I think everyone has had a chance to speak.

Adjournment

Dr. Flowers moved to adjourn the meeting, Councilman Taylor seconded the motion, which carried unanimously.

This 1st day of November, 2022.


Steven D. Murdaugh, Chairmen

ATTEST:


Kaela Brinson, Clerk to Council