

Regular Pickens County Council Meeting

November 1, 2021

6:30 PM

County Council met in regular session, in the Auditorium of the County Administration Facility, with Chairman Chris Bowers presiding. Final agendas, bearing date, time, and location of meeting were mailed to members of council and local news media on Friday, October 29, 2021.

Council Members in Attendance:

Chris Bowers, Chairman

Roy Costner, Vice Chairman

Trey Whitehurst, Vice Chairman Pro-Tem

Alex Saitta

Ensley Feemster

Henry Wilson

Staff in Attendance:

Ken Roper, County Administrator

Les Hendricks, Contract Attorney

Miranda Craig, Deputy Clerk to Council

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Chris Bowers called the meeting of November 1, 2021 to order and welcomed those in attendance. Councilman Ensley Feemster led the Invocation and Veteran Dewain Willis led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Veteran Affairs Presentation did not take place.

PUBLIC FORUM:

Chairman Chris Bowers opened the Public Forum and requested the Clerk to call upon the citizens signed up to speak, and who left a voicemail through the County phone in Council Chambers.

1. **Johnnelle Raines:** Ms. Raines went into discussion regarding ethics. She stated that citizens should not be degraded because they haven't volunteered for a board. Ms. Raines went into further discussion on respecting the rights of citizens, criticism and decorum of county council members.
2. **Deborah Hudson:** Mrs. Hudson went into discussion on liberty, freedom and private property rights. She expressed her concern on about the relationship that exists between having private property rights and freedom. She asked county council to pledge to protect private property rights. She gave council county a book, "Sustainable: The WAR on Free Enterprise, Private Property and Individuals".
3. **Margaret Thompson:** Ms. Thompson presented county council with Clemson Paw Partners financial documents. She went into discussion on Clemson Paw Partners spay neuter clinic and Spartanburg County's numbers. Ms. Thompson asked county council to consider hiring a county vet to work at Clemson Paw Partners.

4. Allan Quinn: Mr. Quinn went into discussion on ethics and county boards and commissions. He expressed his concern on property tax increases. He provided county council with a sample tax bill for reference.
5. Valerie Melkas: Mrs. Melkas went into discussion on trap, neuter, release programs and hiring a vet for Pickens County.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

Chairman Chris Bowers called for a motion to approve the following minutes as presented:

- October 4, 2021 Regular-Called Council Meeting
- Motion was made by Councilman Ensley Feemster, and seconded by Councilman Trey Whitehurst. Seeing no other discussion, the motion carried unanimously (6-0).

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT:

COVID-19 Response Briefing

Mr. Roper updated Council on COVID-19 cases in Pickens County. Mr. Roper stated there are currently 410 active cases reported in Pickens County, within the last 14 days. He stated there have been four hundred seventy- two (472) deaths in Pickens County due to COVID-19. He advised a total of 27,901 confirmed cases of COVID-19 have been reported in Pickens County since March 20th, 2020.

Mr. Roper gave Council information on the DHEC Vaccine Statistics. He stated 47,246, or approximately 42.2%, of Pickens County residents have completed vaccinations.

Fixing County Roads

Mr. Roper gave Council more information on the #KickingAsphalt campaign and the new fixingcountyroads.com website. He went into discussion on the report a road app and the culvert replacement on Erin Lane.

Environmental Enforcement Update

Mr. Roper stated that Litter Officers have visited all recycle centers. He presented statistics gathered over the last two weeks:

- Tarp Handouts – 59
- Decal Handouts – 139
- Illegal Dumpsites Investigated – 3
- Signs in ROWs Removed– 127

Community Relations Update

Mr. Roper shared information on the Pickens County Newsletter that is put out quarterly by the Community Relations Manager. He stated the newsletter can be found under “News Releases” on the front page of the Pickens County Website.

Capital Improvement Plan

Mr. Roper went into discussion on the Capital Improvement Plan and stated that he looks forward to discussion on it at the next Committee of the Whole Meeting.

Mr. Roper suggested to add “Legal Update to Solid Waste” to the Consent Agenda

Public Forum Comments

Councilman Trey Whitehurst went into discussion on the tax bill Mr. Quinn provided. Mr. Whitehurst asked Mr. Roper if the county can list the taxes separate and make it so it will not be touched by another council.

Mr. Roper explained that it is something the county is looking at doing and it depends on the vendor's format page.

Mr. Saitta went into discussion on recycling plastics. He asked Mr. Roper if the county has become successful enough in narrowing the plastic collections to bottles and jogs so that the vendors are buying them again.

Mr. Roper responded to Mr. Saitta stating that the vendor is coming back out this week to re-score the recycling centers. He went into further discussion on plastic sorting, costs and savings.

COMMITTEE REPORT:

The Committee of the Whole met in Main Conference Room, at the Pickens County Administration Facility, on Monday, October 18th, 2021. All members of the committee were in attendance, with Chairman Chris Bowers presiding. Vice Chairman Roy Costner led the Invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Chris Bowers called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE:

2021 RECREATION FUNDING REQUEST DISTRICT 3 – Log No. 166

- Mr. Roper stated Parks, Recreation and Tourism Director, Allison Fowler, is with us tonight to present a request for District 3 funding for Long Shoals Recreation Area.
- Allison Fowler explained the need for these improvements. She said that the Parks, Recreation and Tourism department plans to undertake a number of safety and signage improvements at the site. These improvements include the following:
 - beautification and landscaping at park entrance
 - additional signage in park - safety, rules, etc. consistent with other parks
 - historical/interpretive signage
 - repair existing stairs / build wooden stairs with rails halfway down to the water
 - install donation box / iron ranger
 - path through picnic area - landscape with native plants
 - replace existing picnic tables and pads
 - replace all split rail fencing
 - trail work - add bench(es), fix bridge, connect to other trail system.

ITEMIZED BUDGET

Item	Cost
Landscaping	\$2,000
Signage	\$3,000
Replace Stairs	\$9,000
Replace Split Rail Fencing	\$1,000
Replace picnic tables & pads	\$2,000
Trail Work	\$2,000
Install Iron Ranger/Donation Box	\$1,000
Total	\$20,000

- Council and Staff had detailed discussion that included, but was not limited to:

- The timeline to undergo the repairs
 - The Itemized Budget
 - Consistency with signage
 - Replacing litter signage
 - Pet receptacles
 - Billboard covered area
 - Natural stairs to picnic
 - Split rail fence updates
 - District 3 Recreation Fund request for 911 address signage on boat docks
- ❖ **Councilman Alex Saitta made a motion to approve the 2021 Recreation Funding Request District 3 for Long Shoals Recreation Area. Motion was seconded by Councilman Ensley Feemster and carried (6-0).**

2021 ACCOMMODATIONS TAX FUNDING REQUEST MILE CREEK PARK – Log No. 167

- Allison Fowler presented the Pickens County Parks, Recreation and Tourism Department's 2020 – 2021 Accommodations Tax Funding Application and the 2021 Accommodations Tax Control Log. Mrs. Fowler explained that the staff has requested \$29,000 for new fire rings and picnic tables at Mile Creek Park.
- Council and Staff had detailed discussion that included, but was not limited to:
 - Longevity of picnic tables
 - More affordable fire ring options
 - Safety concerns
 - Number of sites at Mile Creek Park
- Council requested that the Parks, Recreation and Tourism Staff look into more long-term options and bring more information to the next County Council Meeting.

❖ **No Action Taken by the Committee.**

ORDINANCE AMENDING THE PICKENS COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES RELATED TO LITTER AND OR OTHER PROPERTY CONDITIONS – Log No. 182

- Mr. Roper stated the current ordinances related to litter and or other property conditions are geared towards solid waste. He stated that litter citations have started since the swearing in of Litter Control Officers.
- Mr. Hendricks went into discussion on the current magistrates' process and fines.
- Council and staff had detailed discussion that included, but was not limited to:
 - Noise ordinance
 - Unsafe building
 - Enforcement mechanisms
 - Magistrates process
 - The Six Mile Highway property citations
 - Fine amount consistency
 - Trash on your private vs public property
 - Trash on your private property indwelling vs not in dwelling
 - Trash on someone else's property
 - Details of the language of the ordinance
- Council decided this is a longer conversation and that they need more information from Mr. Hendricks. Mr. Hendrick's will get back to council with more information and recommendations for the details of the language.

❖ **No Action Taken by the Committee.**

AMERICAN RESCUE ACT FUNDING – Log No. 177

- Council and staff had detailed discussion that included, but was not limited to:
 - Requests from nonprofit organizations
 - Equalization basin
 - Concerns of choosing one nonprofit organization over another
 - Opening this opportunity for all non profit organizations:
 - Possibility of putting 10% of the ARPA funds towards nonprofit organizations
 - Possibility of Accommodations Tax Committee to look through applications to make sure they meet the intent decided by council and meet the American Rescue Act Funding guidelines
 - Long term positive impact of supporting nonprofit agencies in Pickens County
 - Concerns of Government competing in the private sector
 - Prioritizing county services
- There was a personal discussion between Councilman Alex Saitta and Councilman Henry Wilson. Chairman Chris Bowers was unable to regain order and called for a brief recess. The recess was from 7:17 p.m. – 7:23 p.m.
- ❖ **Chairman Chris Bowers made a motion to go into executive session to discuss one-time funding for county employees out of American Rescue Act Funding. Motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Roy Costner and carried (6-0).**
- ❖ **Chairman Chris Bowers made a motion to recommend to move forward to council meeting American Rescue Act Funding compensation 5/25/21 plan and to exempt county council from the plan. Motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Roy Costner and carried (6-0).**

EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES – Log No. 169

- Mr. Roper went into discussion on concerns from Pickens County EMS employees. He stated that there are changes that could be made to increase morale. Mr. Roper introduced Human Resources Director, Lisa Bryant, to continue discussion.
- Mr. Roper presented his actions taken and pay information:
 - Attended three morning in-service trainings to express appreciation for the EMS staff (9/20, 9/21, 9/22)
 - Facilitated three meetings with EMS shifts A, B, and C to directly address concerns of EMS staff (10/5, 10/7, 10/12)
 - Toured the EMS facility reported to be in disrepair (the Pickens EMS building) to determine appropriate fixes for the issues reported
 - 10/15 Letter to all staff about utilizing the chain of command to facilitate addressing issues effectively and efficiently – Scheduled a ride-along with EMS in early November to gain first-hand knowledge of EMS response

MEMORANDUM



TO: All EMS Employees
 From: Lisa Bryant, Director of Human Resources
 Date: August 6, 2021
 Re: EMS Pay Increases

Congratulations! At their July 26th meeting, Council approved compensation plan adjustments and pay increases for EMS employees! These go into effect at the beginning of this pay period, which is 8/08/21. Below are some important facts you need to know:

- There were only a couple of departments that Council approved additional increases for and EMS was one of those.
- **ALL** EMS employees were included in this pay increase, with the exception of:
 - One employee who didn't qualify, and
 - Part-time Paramedics, since the pay for Part-time Paramedics was increased last year, which was the only EMS job title that was increased last year
- Council allocated \$127,000 for EMS pay increases.
- The hourly increase amounts for EMS employees range from \$0.30 to \$0.75, with most employees receiving \$0.50 per hour.
- Increase amounts were based on several factors, including market pay rates, the start rate for each position, where current EMS employees are within the pay band for that position and the overall compensation structure for EMS.
- Although the hourly increase amounts may seem small, the annual increases are significant. Of course it varies by employee based on your individual position, how many hours you work, your over-time, etc. but there are **78 EMS employees** who are receiving annual increases of anywhere from **\$1,100 - \$2,600** with the average increase being around **\$1,500**.
- EMS is the only group of first responder employees who fall under the Department of Labor's Fair Labor Standards Act for regular employees, which means that hourly EMS employees qualify for over-time for all hours worked in excess of 40 in a pay period. Because of the way PC EMS is staffed, our full-time EMS employees have **over 800 hours of built-in over-time each year** as part of their normal schedule. Of course, that is part of the equation when looking at how the per hour increase calculates out for each employee's annual increase amount.
- This additional pay increase is on top of the 2% COLA that all employees received last pay period, which equates to annual increases of \$800 - \$1,000 for entry level full-time EMS employees and much higher for those seasoned EMS employees whose pay rates are higher as well as those who work more hours.

Again, congratulations to our EMS employees! 2020 was a hard year for all of us but particularly EMS. Administration and County Council recognizes this and values you and the service you provide to the citizens of Pickens County. Thank you for your hard work!

Fiscal Year	Type	Amount	Date	Notes
2021	Position Increase		7/1/20	Part-Time Paramedic pay increased from \$15.25 to \$18.00. This is the only pay rate that was adjusted
2021	COLA	3.0%	9/20/20	All Employees
2022	COLA	2.0%	7/1/21	All Employees
2022	Market & Equity Adjustments	\$175,635	8/8/21	Council designated an additional 1% for Market & Equity Adjustments for certain positions. All EMS employees & CDL Drivers received Market Increases & 3 ROD employees received equity adjustments. \$127,281 of the \$175,638 went to EMS increases

- Mrs. Bryant went into discussion on suggested holiday pay updates in red:

HOLIDAY PAY POLICY

To receive holiday pay, an eligible employee must be present at work or taking an approved absence on the work days immediately preceding and immediately following the day on which the holiday is observed. Employees who call in sick on the day before or day after a holiday should provide a doctor's note in order to receive their holiday pay.

Part-time employees who work a regular schedule are eligible for 4 paid holidays per year, when the holiday is observed on a day the part-time employee would otherwise be scheduled to work. Those 4 holidays are New Year's Day, Independence Day, Thanksgiving Day, and Christmas Day. Part-time employees may receive holiday pay for the same number of hours they would have otherwise worked on the holiday, if any.

The number of hours of holiday pay an eligible employee who is off work for the holiday may receive is based on the employee's normal work schedule. Eligible employees hired to work 7.5 hours per day receive 7.5 hours of holiday pay; employees hired to work 8 hours per day receive 8 hours of holiday pay, etc. Due to the 24-hour shifts, Fire and EMS employees may have a different holiday pay structure.

Some employees may be required to work on a holiday. Eligible full-time and part-time employees who work on a holiday will receive holiday pay in addition to their regular pay for the time worked.

Holiday pay is paid at straight time. Hours of paid holiday time do not count as hours worked for purposes of calculating overtime.

Employees on FMLA do not receive holiday pay.

The County Administrator has sole authority to make changes regarding observance of holidays under this policy.

The revisions contained herein are effective 10/19/21 and replace any Holiday policy that precedes this date.

Vacation credits do not have any cash value, and employees will not receive compensation for any forfeited vacation credits. Employees will not be paid for unused vacation credits when they leave employment with Pickens County.

Employees requesting to take more than one (1) week of vacation at a time should seek approval from their supervisor well in advance.

Approval must be granted from the Department Head and Division Head or Administrator for an employee to take more than two (2) weeks of vacation at a time. Such approval will be granted or denied based on the needs of the department at the time of the request.

Employees who are resigning employment with Pickens County may not use vacation as part of their required 2-week notice. Employees who do not work a 2-week notice will not be considered to have resigned in good standing.

The revisions contained herein are effective ??? and replace any Holiday policy that precedes this date.

- Council and staff had detailed discussion that included, but was not limited to:
 - Part Time Employee holiday pay
 - Holiday pay rates
 - Hourly rate of pay
 - Importance of pay
- ❖ Chairman Chris Bowers made a motion to add "and part time" to the holiday day policy. Motion was seconded by Councilman Trey Whitehurst and carried unanimously (6-0).

- Mrs. Bryant confirmed this will go into effect on November 2, 2021.
- Mrs. Bryant went into discussion on vacation carry over policy updates in red:

Employees are allowed to carry over up to one (1) week of vacation credits each year, as follows.

30 hour employees	30 hour carryover limit
37.5 hour employees	37.5 hour carryover limit
40 hour employees	40 hour carryover limit
42.5 hour employees	42.5 hour carryover limit
24/48 hour employees	????

Any vacation hours remaining at the end of the last pay period in the calendar year that exceed the allowed carryover limit will be forfeited.

- Council and staff had detailed discussion that included, but was not limited to:
 - Past vacation leave policies
 - Shift coverage and scheduling
 - Encouraging employees to use vacation time
 - Buy back of vacation hours
 - 24/48 hour shift logistics
 - Carry over vacation hours
 - EMS goals
- ❖ **Chairman Chris Bowers made a motion to add “72-hour carryover limit” for 24/48-hour employees. Motion was seconded by Councilman Henry Wilson and carried (6-0).**
- Chairman Chris Bowers requested data and recommendations based on the EMS goals at the next Committee of the Whole Meeting.

ADJOURN:

Hearing no further Committee business, Chairman Chris Bowers called for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Vice Chairman Roy Costner, seconded by Chairman Ensley Feemster and carried unanimously (6-0). Meeting was adjourned at 8:33 p.m.

COUNCIL CORRESPONDENCE:

Chairman Chris Bowers announced the following:

- The next Committee of the Whole meeting will be on Monday, November 15, 2021 at 6:00 p.m. in the Main Conference Room of the Administration Building.
- The next Council Meeting will be held on Monday, December 6, 2021 at 6:30 p.m. in Council Chambers of the Administration Building.

Chairman Bowers called for other council correspondence.

Vice Chairman Roy Costner announced that Wednesday is Councilman Ensley Feemster’s birthday.

Seeing no other correspondence, Chairman Bowers announced moving to Motion Period and New Business.

MOTION PERIOD AND NEW BUSINESS:

Chairman Chris Bowers opened the floor for motion period and new business.

- Chairman Chris Bowers made a motion to add Legal Update from Solid Waste to executive session this evening. Motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Roy Costner and carried unanimously (6-0).
- Councilman Trey Whitehurst made a motion to add Clemson Paw Partners to the consent agenda. Motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Roy Costner and carried unanimously (6-0).
- Councilman Alex Saitta made a motion to add the process for the medical control contract and that it be opened back in January to the consent agenda. Motion was seconded by Councilman Trey Whitehurst and carried unanimously (6-0).

Seeing no discussion, Chairman Bowers closed the floor.

STATE AERONAUTICS COMMISSION PRESENTATION

Mr. Roper introduced Skeets Cooper from the Aeronautics Commission to speak.

Mr. Cooper went into discussion on the State Aeronautics Commission and the Pickens County Airport. He stated that the Pickens County Airport has only had 3 reports to law enforcement since 1989 and has been patrolled 262 times since September 1st, 2021 – present. Mr. Cooper went into further discussion on safety, security, and the economic impact of the Pickens County Airport. He thanked the previous and current Pickens County Councils for their support.

UPDATE ON APPALACHIAN COUNCIL OF GOVERNMENT’S HIGHWAY 11 CORRIDOR STUDY

Mr. Roper introduced the next presenters from the Appalachian Council of Government to speak.

Council and the Appalachian Council of Government presenters had detailed discussion that included, but was not limited to:

- Scenic Highway 11 Corridor Public Meeting
- Recommendations from residents
- Feedback from residents and business owners
- Doing more research on land use
- Creating a task force
- Online survey results
- Protecting and preserving the character of the county
- Future public meetings

CONSIDERATION OF CHANGE IN PICKENS COUNTY EMPLOYEE VACATION POLICY

Chairman Chris Bowers went into discussion on the proposed 24/48-hour vacation days policy. He stated since this came from the Committee of the Whole Meeting, no motion is needed and it passed unanimously in Committee (6-0).

CONSIDERATION OF CHANGE IN PICKENS COUNTY HOLIDAY PAY

Chairman Chris Bowers went into discussion on the proposed holiday pay policy. He stated since this came from the Committee of the Whole Meeting, no motion is needed and it passed unanimously in Committee (6-0).

CONSIDERATION OF AMERICAN RESCUE ACT FUNDING FOR FIRST RESPONDERS AND PICKENS COUNTY EMPLOYEES

Chairman Chris Bowers went into discussion on the proposed 5/25/2/1 plan. He stated since this came from the Committee of the Whole Meeting, no motion is needed and it passed unanimously (6-0).

REVIEW OF FIRE REVENUE STRUCTURE

Mr. Roper introduced Director of Emergency Services, Billy Gibson to speak.

Council and staff had detailed discussion that included, but was not limited to:

- Previous Fire Fee structure
- Budget impacts
- Fire fee amounts based on square footage
- Current fire fee structure more uniform across the board
- Commercial Fire Fee square footage cap
- Possibly reviewing the Fire Revenue Structure on next year's budget review

Councilman Henry Wilson made a motion to move this to the next Committee of the Whole meeting with staff bringing back further information. Motion was seconded by Vice Chairman Roy Costner and carried unanimously (6-0).

THIRD READING OF AN ORDINANCE TO THE CODE OF THE COUNTY OF PICKENS TO CERTIFY A PORTION OF THE ALICE MANUFACTURING COMPANY, INC. ARIAL MILL PROPERTY AS A TEXTILE MILL SITE UNDER THE SOUTH CAROLINA TEXTILES COMMUNITIES REVITALIZATION ACT.

Chairman Bowers asked for a motion to constitute third reading of this Ordinance.

- Motion was made by Councilman Ensley Feemster, and seconded by Councilman Henry Wilson.
 - Councilman Trey Whitehurst went into discussion on why he is not voting for this ordinance.
- Seeing no discussion, the motion carried (5-1) with Councilman Trey Whitehurst opposed.

CONSENT AGENDA

1. ANNUAL UPDATE TO CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN – *Committee of the Whole*
2. CLEMSON PAW PARTNERS AND COUNTY VET– *Committee of the Whole*
3. PICKENS COUNTY MEDICAL CONTROL CONTRACT AND REVIEW OF THE PROCESS – *Committee of the Whole*
4. FIRE FEE REVENUE STRUCTURE– *Committee of the Whole*
 - Motion was made by Councilman Alex Saitta, seconded by Vice Chairman Roy Costner and carried unanimously (6-0).

EXECUTIVE SESSION: S.C. Code of Laws, Section 30-4-70 (a):

Chairman Chris Bowers called for a motion to convene into Executive Session as defined by S.C. Code of Laws, Section 30-4-70 (a). Chairman Bowers further stated that each issue would be discussed as the Law provides.

- Motion was made by Chairman Chris Bowers, seconded by Councilman Trey Whitehurst and carried unanimously (6-0), to convene in executive session for the stated purposes after a five-minute recess.

No action came out of executive session.

ADJOURN:

Hearing no further Council business, Chairman Chris Bowers called for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Vice Chairman Roy Costner, seconded by Councilman Ensley Feemster and carried unanimously (6-0). Pickens County Council stood adjourned at 8:56 p.m.

Respectively Submitted:

Approved:

Miranda Craig, Deputy Clerk to Council

Chris Bowers, Chairman of County Council