

Council Members

District 1: Stuart Graham
District 2: Charlene McGriff
District 3: Billy Mosteller, Vice Chair
District 4: Jose Luis
District 5: Steve Harper
District 6: Bryant Neal, Secretary
District 7: Brian Carnes, Chair

**County Administrator**

Dennis E. Marstall

County Attorney

Ginny L. Merck-Dupont

Clerk to Council

Sherrie Simpson

February 12, 2025

12:00 PM

LANCASTER COUNTY COUNCIL

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE RETREAT AMENDED AGENDA

COUNCIL CHAMBERS

2ND FLOOR, COUNTY ADMINISTRATION BUILDING

101 NORTH MAIN STREET

LANCASTER, SC 29720

MINUTES

Council Members Present: Brian Carnes, Stuart Graham, Jose Luis, Charlene McGriff, Billy Mosteller, and Bryant Neal

Council Member(s) Absent: Steve Harper

Staff Members/Others Present: Dennis Marstall, County Administrator; Ginny Merck-Dupont, County Attorney; Sherrie Simpson, Clerk to Council; Stephany Snowden, Deputy County Administrator; Sabrena Harris, Chief Financial Officer; Jamie Privuznak, Budget Director; Scott Hernandez, Chief Information Officer; Jeff Catoe, Public Works Director; Brenda Thompson, Public Information Officer; Lisa Parker, Human Resources Director; Allison Hardin, Development Services Director; Lauren Hill, Deputy Clerk to Council; the press; various elected officials; various Department Heads; various employees; and citizens.

A quorum of Lancaster County Council was present for the meeting. The following press were notified of the meeting by e-mail in accordance with the Freedom of Information Act: *The Lancaster News*, *Kershaw News Era*, *The Rock Hill Herald*, Cable News 2, Channel 9 and the local government channel. The agenda was posted in the lobby of the County Administration Building and also on the County website the required length of time. The PowerPoint presentation utilized during the meeting is attached to the written minutes in the Clerk to Council's office.

Call to Order Committee of the Whole Retreat - Chairman Brian Carnes

Chairman Brian Carnes called the Committee of the Whole retreat meeting to order at approximately 12:00 p.m.

Approval of the Amended Agenda

Dennis Marstall requested that the agenda be approved and amended to include the **2024 Year in Review**, which was skipped during the February 4, 2025, retreat meeting. Jose Luis so moved. Seconded by Bryant Neal. The motion to approve the agenda as amended Passed by a vote of 6-0. Absent: Harper.

2024 Year in Review - Strategic Priorities and Successes - Stephany Snowden

Stephany Snowden provided an overview of the 2024 year in review via the County PowerPoint presentation. There was no discussion from Council regarding this presentation.

Preparing for Reassessment - Brad Carnes, Assessor

Brad Carnes provided an overview of the reassessment process via the County PowerPoint presentation. He reviewed the three main goals of the Assessor's Office: (1) to achieve accuracy in property tax assessments; (2) to achieve equity in the property valuation process; and (3) to achieve fairness in property tax distribution. He further discussed the key services of the Assessor's office and that their office uses a mass appraisal process in conducting reassessment of properties, which occurs every five (5) years as prescribed by State law. He provided a timeline of activities for their office to conduct reassessment. He provided an overview of the appeal process for citizens. He explained the Assessable Transfer of Interest (ATI) and the "rollback millage" concept. Council and staff discussed how the Assessable Transfer of Interest (ATI) removes caps from real property; that all real property would be reassessed by April but that all real property reassessments would be capped at a fifteen percent increase (15%) except for properties that sold in the last year, which could cause pricing discrepancies in similar real property valuations; that the County does not reassess manufacturing as that is completed by the State of South Carolina; staffing concerns in order to get all the real property assessments completed and how their budget increases temporarily during reassessment; the appeals process for citizens that disagree with their reassessment valuation; that the Assessor's office currently has one appraiser position vacant; and that the County is heavily residential and not commercial.

Fiscal Year 2026 Millage Considerations - Dennis Marstall, County Administrator, and Sabrena Harris, CFO

Sabrena Harris provided an overview of millage considerations for the fiscal year 2026 via the County PowerPoint presentation. She discussed Act 388, rollback millage requirements and growth versus millage, revenue projections, and funding considerations such as local government funding, debt and bond payments, and property assessment appeals. Finally, she provided millage history for the County from 2020 to 2025. Council and staff discussed the rollback process and its implications for the upcoming budget year.

Revenue Forecast - Sabrena Harris, CFO; and Jamie Privuznak, Budget Director

Sabrena Harris and Jamie Privuznak provided an overview of the revenue forecast for the upcoming budget via the County PowerPoint presentation. First, Ms. Harris reviewed the revenue collections by explaining the various revenue sources; such as, ad-valorem taxes, vehicle taxes, building permits, interest income, road improvement fees, and ambulance charges. She then reviewed the actual amounts and percentages collected in those categories year-to-date.

Jamie Privuznak then provided an overview of actual and projected revenues for each category. She provided a proposal of needs to use for the unaudited, unassigned fund balance for the upcoming year. Council Member Luis requested a graph of trends and projections for the upcoming budget and a forecast for the remainder of the year. Council and staff discussed the drop in road fees between FY24 and FY25. They also discussed interest income, building permit fees, debt, bond ratings, and the unaudited fund balance.

Lastly, Sabrena Harris provided a "grants" overview. She reviewed the number and amount of grants administered by the County currently and discussed the challenges associated with not having a full-time dedicated grants administrator/coordinator position. She discussed the positive and negative aspects of having a dedicated full-time grants coordinator and grant writer on staff. Council and staff discussed the need for a grant writer and grant administrator, the County's current number of federal grants, whether the revenue stream from grants would be as robust this year based on the federal government possibly doing away with or cutting grant funding, and whether these positions should be implemented now. Council and staff continued to have a lengthy discussion on the benefits of full-time dedicated staff member positions of grant administrator and/or grant writer, whether both positions were needed or just one, and what the return on investment may be for the positions.

Break

Council took a break in the retreat meeting which began at approximately 1:58 p.m. and ended at approximately 2:18 p.m., when the meeting resumed.

2025 Priority Points - Jeff Catoe, Public Services Director; Dennis Marstall, County Administrator; and Stephany Snowden, Deputy County Administrator

a. (Transportation Sales Tax and Road Funding Source, Multi-Year Fire Funding Plan, Grants Management Position, Emergency Management Director, and other positions)

Jeff Catoe, Dennis Marstall, and Stephany Snowden provided an overview of priority points for the County in 2025 via the County PowerPoint presentation. Jeff Catoe provided an overview of the current road funding available in the County via the South Carolina Department of Transportation (SCDOT) project funding, the Capital Project Sales Tax 2 Proviso, the Capital Project Sales Tax 3, State C Funds administered through the County Transportation Committee (CTC), and the County Road fee, and he provided estimates of funding from those various sources. He discussed the process for getting the proposed road projects on the Transportation Sales Tax referendum that recently failed. Next, Dennis Marstall discussed the results of the referendum. Council and staff discussed the County's options with regard to possibly pursuing another Transportation Sales Tax referendum. They discussed whether the County should reduce the scope of the projects or keep the same projects on the referendum, whether the school bond influenced the failure of the Tax, whether the County should bond the projects instead of using a Tax, the need for a better educational campaign with regard to another proposed Tax referendum, and whether the ballot question needed to be changed. Council and staff continued to discuss the cost of moving utilities along Highway 521, the need to wait to see what the school board would do with regard to another bond referendum, the number of specific projects, the need for a transportation planner to help manage growth and guide development, the type and number of projects for another proposed referendum, and the possible use of funds.

Next, Stephany Snowden provided an overview of a proposed multi-year Fire Funding Plan. She explained the benefits of a stable fire service and a fire funding plan, such as lower insurance costs for residents. She reviewed the various types of firefighters, such as volunteer, full-time, part-time, and facilities and equipment. She also reviewed the history of the number of fire service calls since 2021. She reviewed the vehicle replacement plan and the possible borrowing scenarios for the upcoming budget year. Council and staff discussed possible approaches to obtaining fire apparatus, including the fact that Administration staff is

recommending purchasing the equipment via a twenty-million-dollar bond package. Council and staff also discussed the possible response of volunteer firefighters to a Countywide millage, and the positive and negative aspects of fire districts versus a Countywide millage. Council and staff discussed the possibility of using excess funds for fire apparatus instead of using a bond package. Finally, they discussed possibly separating the fire service and emergency management departments.

Council Rules of Procedure Update - Ginny Merck-Dupont, County Attorney

Ginny Merck Dupont provided a brief overview of the timeline with regard to moving forward with the Council Rules of Procedures. Council and staff discussed the need for succession planning and substitution of the Chair, alternative attendance at meetings, setting the agenda, public hearings, and moving public hearing comments to mirror citizen comments for three minutes for each comment. Council and staff discussed boards and commissions, motions, discipline, and whether to pass the Rules of Procedures via a Resolution versus an Ordinance. Council and staff discussed bringing these Rules forward at the March 10, 2025, Council meeting.

2025 Retreat Recap / County Priorities / Open Discussion - Dennis Marstall, County Administrator

Dennis Marstall provided a retreat recap via the County PowerPoint presentation. There was no further discussion from Council.

Adjournment

Jose Luis moved to adjourn the Committee of the Whole retreat meeting. The motion to adjourn Passed by a vote 6-0. Absent: Harper.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at approximately 4:59 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Sherrie Simpson

Sherrie Simpson
Clerk to Council

Approved by Council on March 10, 2025.

Bryant Neal

Bryant Neal, Secretary