



City Council Regular Meeting  
Meeting Minutes – City Hall Council Chambers, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor

September 28, 2021

**I. CALL TO ORDER**

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**7:04PM**

Stephen D. Murray III, Mayor

All of Council members in attendance - Phil Cromer, Neil Lipsitz, Mike McFee, Mitch Mitchell, and Mayor Murray.

**II. INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

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Mayor Pro Tem, Mike McFee

**III. PROCLAMATIONS/COMMENDATIONS/RECOGNITIONS**

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A. Character Education Proclamation - Catherine Bowman, Battery Creek High School.

Motion to approve was made by Mayor Pro Tem, McFee and seconded by Councilman Mitchell.

Approval was unanimous.

B. Proclamation proclaiming October as Domestic Violence Awareness Month.

Motion to approve was made by Councilman Cromer and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem, McFee.

Approval was unanimous.

**IV. PUBLIC COMMENT**

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Debra Gray, 1300 Barnwell Bluff inquired about the city's position on bicycles being on sidewalks. Mayor Murray directed her to get with Police Chief McDorman to see if there are any ordinances that address the issue.

**V. MINUTES**

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A. Worksession and Regular Meeting - September 14, 2021.

Motion to approve was made by Councilman Cromer and seconded by Councilman Lipsitz.

Minutes approved as presented.

## VI. OLD BUSINESS

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- A. Ordinance repealing Part 7, Chapter 1, Sections 7-1001 through 7-1027 of the City Code of Ordinances (Business Licenses) and replacing it with the 2022 Model Business License Ordinance - 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

Motion to approve was made by Mayor Pro Tem, McFee and seconded by Councilman Cromer.

Approval was unanimous.

- B. Ordinance amending Part 3, Chapter 1, Article A, Section 3-1004 of the City Code of Ordinances, to provide for civil penalties for failure to remove building materials and other obstructions to City Streets beyond time periods established by City Manager - 2<sup>nd</sup> reading.

Motion to approve was made by Councilman Lipsitz and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem, McFee.

Approval was unanimous.

## VII. NEW BUSINESS

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- A. Agreement for Sale & Purchase of Real Estate, 1100 Boundary Street - 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

Motion to approve was made by Mayor Pro Tem, McFee and seconded by Councilman Mitchell.

Bill Prokop, City Manager, stated that talks were underway about 2 years ago regarding the purchase of Bridges Preparatory School, 1100 Boundary Street. Talks were also started with USCB, TCL and the South Coast Cyber Center about using the facility to expand their programs. Mr. Prokop feels that this is a good investment for the city and will create jobs, and workforce development. This is a 24,000 square foot building on almost 2 acres of land, and the cost would be 2.3 million dollars. A contribution will be made towards the purchase from our State Delegation. This will allow the city to be creative with our economic development efforts.

Councilman Mitchell inquired about entities that wanted to utilize the building. Would we enter into a lease agreement with them? Mr. Prokop stated that yes, we would. He stated that it could be a lease agreement with an option to purchase.

Mayor Murray stated that at this time, we are wanting to start our talks with all entities to see if a partnership can be created. The city is expressing their interest in this project and hopes that the majority will support this endeavor. He hopes that a deal can be structured.

Mr. Alan Dechovitz, stated that he has been an advocate of the city creating revenues in excess of operating needs. He supports the purchase of the building and its intended use, to make USCB more attractive to students.

Mr. Dick Stewart applauds the city for taking this step. It is a unique property, in a unique area, and it is well suited for what the university needs at this time.

Mr. Ian Scott, Beaufort Regional Chamber of Commerce President and CEO, was also in favor of this purchase. Nothing would make us more sustainable than diversifying our local employment base. This would expand the university's footprint in marketable skills.

Mayor Murray reiterated the fact that this piece of property has not been on our tax rolls and that we are not losing any revenue.

Approval was unanimous.

- B. Agreement for Sale and Purchase of Real Estate, 591 Robert Smalls Parkway - 1<sup>st</sup> Reading.

Motion to approve was made by Councilman Cromer and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem, McFee.

Mr. Prokop said that this purchase makes good financial sense. We would save up to 3 million dollars over the term of the lease. The fire station is in a good growth location, and we must also remember that Port Royal shares in one-third of the associated costs. The purchase price is 3 million dollars.

Approval was unanimous.

## **VIII. REPORTS**

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### **City Manager's Report**

Mr. Prokop started by reading a quote from Governing Magazine. It was about the distrust of government. He stated that City Officials have been receiving threatening emails for decisions that they have made. Beaufort has been known as a place where history, business and charm thrive. He said that we are losing the charm and hopes that we can bring back civility, understanding and trust in one another.

Thanked Public Works for all the extra work that was done over the last two weeks during the recent rains. He also thanked David Prichard, Dan Frazier and staff in the Community and Economic Development Department for all their hard work in handling the comments from the public, local groups, and businesses on the Comprehensive Plan.

This Friday, October 1, 2021, is the start of the 2021 Shrimp Festival. He hopes everyone will come on down for some great food and entertainment. Masks and social distancing are very much encouraged.

There are some engineering projects that are starting in the next few months in various locations throughout the city. When you see the surveyors and engineers, you will know that the next phase of the stormwater and road improvement programs have begun.

### **Mayor's Report**

Congratulated Port Royal on a successful Oktoberfest and is looking forward to the Shrimp Festival.

Thanked Ivette Burgess, Human Resources Director, for inviting council to participate in the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Workshop that was held on September 17, 2021.

Reported that numbers are going down on COVID. Please continue to practice social distancing, masking, and getting vaccinated.

Reiterated Mr. Prokop's comments and hopes that everyone can discuss their opinions in a civil manner. He has seen a meanness and lack of civility within our city. We need to continue our dialogue in a more respectful way and work through our differences. We should be kind and extend grace to one another.

### **Councilman Lipsitz**

Stated in reference to the Comprehensive Plan, the Citizens of Beaufort are our consultants, and their comments and voices are being heard.

Was recognized by the County Council for helping get pickleball courts established at Southside and Shell Point.

### **Mayor Pro Tem, McFee**

Congratulated USCB's Center for the Performing Arts for a successful production of "All Shook Up". They did a tremendous job.

**Councilman Mitchell**

Thanked Mr. Prokop for sharing his heartfelt comments. He stated that he will continue to conduct himself responsibly.

Mentioned that the Charles Lind Brown Community Task Force did their briefing in worksession earlier today. He thanked everyone involved with this project. He stated that County Administrator, Eric Greenway was very instrumental as well.

**Councilman Cromer**

Nothing to report.

**IX. ADJOURN**

**8:05PM**

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Motion to adjourn was made by Councilman Cromer and seconded by Councilman Mitchell.

All in favor.

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Disclaimer: This document is a summary. All City Council Worksession and Regular Meetings are recorded. Live stream can be found on the City's website at [www.cityofbeaufort.org](http://www.cityofbeaufort.org) (Agenda section). Audio recordings are available upon request by contacting the City Clerk, Traci Guldner at 843-525-7024 or by email at [tguldner@cityofbeaufort.org](mailto:tguldner@cityofbeaufort.org).