



The Beacon

Behind the scenes at the City of Beaufort



INSIDE:



Safe Living
Beaufort off to
strong start

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Fall 2024



The Beacon

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Cover and inside photos by SK Signs, Design & Marketing

COVER: The James Rhett House, at 303 Federal Street, was built circa 1886. This was one of the beautiful homes open for tour on Historic Beaufort Foundation’s 2024 Fall Festival of House & Gardens. Floral decorations by the Royal Pines Garden Club.

RIGHT: The Elizabeth Barnwell-Gough House, 705 Washington Street, was built circa 1790-1800, and was featured in Historic Beaufort Foundation’s Fall Festival. Floral arrangements by Lady’s Island Garden Club.



What are your hopes for 2025 for Beaufort?



Mayor Phil Cromer

Re-elected as mayor in 2024; previously served on City Council from 2014 to 2022

My hopes for 2025 are to address the Waterfront Park, marina lease, development codes, and begin construction on the stormwater projects. The strategic planning session will identify goals for 2025-2027.



Mayor Pro Tem Mike McFee

Re-elected to City Council in 2022; has served since 2008

My hopes for 2025 would be for the continued health and vitality of the City, and for the opportunity to improve and embrace greater cooperation with our valued partners and our community as a whole.



Councilman Neil Lipsitz

Re-elected to City Council in 2024; first elected in 2020

To find a resolution for Waterfront Park, negotiate a reasonable contract on the marina with Safe Harbor, and start repairs on Pigeon Point landing.



Councilman Mitch Mitchell

Re-elected to City Council in 2024; first elected in 2020

Ensuring the viability of Chambers Waterfront Park, completing our stormwater drainage projects, and acquiring a management and maintenance agreement for our marina.



Councilman Josh Scallate

Elected to City Council in 2022

Priorities will be further ironed out through our Strategic Planning Session in January. However, I envision the Waterfront Park, public safety, and an organized maintenance plan for our stormwater infrastructure to be at the top of the list.

A Note from the City Manager

It is only fitting in this third edition of The Beacon that I recognize Kathleen Williams and her contributions to the City of Beaufort. You see, you’re only able to read this because of her work in putting it together. Sadly, for the City, this is the last edition that will bear her thumbprint. Kathleen is retiring this December, and we wish her all the best in entering this well-deserved next phase of her life.

Kathleen joined the City of Beaufort staff in December of 2019, and has been a great asset to the City for the last five years. In our progress toward increasing transparency, she has been leading the charge in making sure residents and business owners get information in a timely manner while also making sure their voices are heard by City Council and Staff.

In absence of Kathleen, there would be no Beacon, no Neighborhood Meetings, nor would there be many other opportunities and avenues for community engagement that currently exist. I feel fortunate to have been able to work with, and learn from, such a consummate professional. She has built a strong foundation upon which our community engagement program will continue to grow, and for that we are very grateful.

Scott M. Marshall



The relieving platform sits underneath the grassy expanse at Waterfront Park, and is in need of repair.

City focuses on Waterfront Park issues

One of the City of Beaufort's chief current concerns is the state of what's known as the relieving platform at the Henry C. Chambers Park — better known as Waterfront Park.

An in-depth inspection of the relieving platform and seawall was performed by McSweeney Engineers this past spring, and a report was submitted to City Council at the June 11 Work Session.

The relieving platform sits underneath the grassy expanse of the park, and is supported by 570 piles, which are concrete columns and reinforced steel that are driven into the channel. McSweeney found extensive shoaling underneath the platform — an accumulation of sediment — that restricted the divers' access to some of the piles. And the divers also found that of the piles it could access, many showed signs of deterioration — softening concrete, exposed steel — and a few piles were actually broken.

The City has conducted regular inspections of the relieving platform, and in 2018 and 2019, it had a total of 47 piles "encapsulated" with high-strength epoxy grout to strengthen the piles. But it's clear now that much more must be done.

In July, the City advertised a Request

for Qualifications (RFQ) for consultant services to advise the City on repairs and other work needed to ensure the relieving platform is structurally sound.

The consulting firm will conduct additional underwater surveying and testing, identify a range of solutions, and produce estimates of probable costs.

A committee evaluated the RFQ responses and is expected to recommend a consulting firm to City Council at its Nov. 12 meeting.

The City will seek grants from the state and federal governments to fund any work needed on the relieving platform.

Consistent with engineering recommendations, the small cruise ships that have previously anchored at Waterfront Park are not allowed to dock until a permanent solution can be implemented.

The lease

In 2019, the City of Beaufort signed a lease with Safe Harbor to manage its Downtown Marina. Safe Harbor manages a number of marinas along the East Coast, Gulf Coast and West Coast.

Safe Harbor was required to invest at least \$1 million in the marina during the first 10 years of the lease. Another

\$100,000 would be required during each 10-year term the lease is renewed, up to 40 years. Additionally, Safe Harbor pays the city 15 percent of its gross revenue from dock fees, 7.5% of money made from retail sales, and 20 cents of each gallon of fuel sold.

However, the lease was signed with no public input and with a single vote by City Council. State law requires that municipal governments convey property through an ordinance, which requires two readings before City Council.

To address this, Council considered first reading of an ordinance on Aug. 27, to retroactively approve the lease agreement. After some discussion and public input, the ordinance was postponed and has not yet been placed on the agenda for future action.

The ensuing discussion resulted in City Council's desire to establish a Negotiating Committee and move forward in negotiating with Safe Harbor on changes to the existing agreement, or to negotiate a new agreement. Council is expected to consider a resolution to establish the Negotiating Committee at its Nov. 12 meeting.



There are two playgrounds at Southside Park — for younger and older children — plus a new picnic area.



Capital Projects team working hard to make things easier

In the last few months, the City of Beaufort has instituted a Capital Improvements Program, which has systemized how the City manages its capital projects, from conception through construction. This involves an internal Capital Projects Team, which meets weekly under the purview of Assistant City Manager JJ Sauve; a new planning process, which will include extensive neighborhood participation and public outreach; and a public-facing Capital Projects Dashboard on the City's website, with real-time information on every capital project in the City.

"The traditional approach to capital projects in the City was characterized by fragmented processes, inconsistent internal communication and a non-systematic approach to project identification with limited public input," said City Manager Scott Marshall. "JJ and his team have built the framework, are polishing processes and are acquiring the tools for a comprehensive, well-coordinated capital projects program which relies heavily on public engagement."

And if you're not sure what constitutes a capital project — it's typically a long-term project that involves facilities or

infrastructure, and requires extensive funding that does not come from the operating budget.

"Preserving our community while creating sustainability and resilience has been an ongoing strategic goal for the City, and to accomplish that we are working to adopt best practices and develop internal procedures to ensure accountability to the public we serve," Sauve said.

CIP team

Besides Sauve, the team consists of newly hired CIP Director Raul Dominguez, Public Works Director Nate Farrow, Downtown Operations Director Linda Roper, Community Development Director Curt Freese, Finance Director Alan Eisenmann, Assistant Finance Director Sandra Rice, and Procurement Officer Jay Phillips.

This team comprises the departments most involved in capital projects, from determining financing, to putting out bids and selecting contractors. The regular meetings allow the team to keep on top of issues as they develop, and make sure everyone is on the same page.

Continued on next page

Dashboard will keep you up to date on City's Capital Projects

The City of Beaufort has added a Capital Improvements Program page to its website, and on that you can find our Capital Projects Dashboard.

This user-friendly table contains all current capital projects (including those still on the drawing board), from Southside Park Phase 1 to Carnegie Library improvements to all the stormwater projects now taking place.

Click on any one of these, and you will find a wealth of information — who the manager is, the project's status and estimated end date, a project description, progress reports from contractors, the approved budget and the current balance.

Previously, there was no easy way for the public to access information on individual projects, other than coming to City Hall and reviewing them with the project manager. Now this "one-stop shopping" makes it simple for anyone to obtain up-to-date information on the City's many projects.

"This dashboard is one of the first steps in creating a more interactive and engaging public portal system featuring live updates and pertinent project information to everyone in the public," said Assistant City Manager JJ Sauve. "As we continue to build the Capital Improvements Program out, more detailed information including project documents and timelines will continue to be integrated for public consumption."

Scan this QR code to check out the current status of our capital improvement



projects, including Southside and Washington Street Parks and stormwater projects.

Beaufort to celebrate Lafayette's visit here 200 years ago

It's only fitting that, for a city steeped in history, we know how to throw a party to celebrate that history.

And that's what Beaufort will do in March 2025, as it commemorates the 200th anniversary of Marquis de Lafayette's Farewell Tour of the Nation in March 1825.

Lafayette, a French nobleman and military officer, volunteered to join the Continental Army under the command of Gen. George Washington during the Revolutionary War. He commanded troops in the Siege of Yorktown in 1781, the battle that secured our country's independence from Great Britain.

In August of 1824, at the age of 64, he returned to the United States to begin his farewell tour. He visited 24 states, including South Carolina. His visit to South Carolina began in Cheraw, included Columbia and Charleston, and ended in Beaufort on March 18, 1825.

The City of Beaufort, the Historic Beaufort Foundation, the Convention & Visitors Bureau, the American Friends of Lafayette and the Lafayette Trail, Inc., are collaborating to make March 2025 a very special month. Festivities will begin the first week in March and culminate on March 18. The activities will include lectures, a First Friday contest and parade for children, Beaufort County Public Library events, school events, and Lafayette displays at various venues.

On March 18, a re-enactment of Lafayette's arrival in Beaufort will take place, complete with a Lafayette impersonator, a ship



Marquis de Lafayette, a pivotal leader in the Revolutionary War, made an historic stop in Beaufort in March 1825.

(Lafayette arrived by steamship), a 13-gun salute, various re-enactors, a procession, and a costume ball at the pavilion at Henry C. Chambers Park.

Stay tuned! You'll be hearing much more about this bicentennial as it draws closer.

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Internal processes

The team is adopting industry best practices to ensure consistency in policies and procedures. A Project Management Standard Operating Procedure Manual is being drafted and a Project Management System is also under development. A shared records management system is also used to synchronize team activities.

The team is reviewing such items as the use of Indefinite Delivery Contracts, and has found that in past contracts, some language is too specific and other language is too vague. It's developing a more streamlined request for the proposals/qualifications process.

"These internal processes create clarity and ensure consistent and timely com-

munication within the project team, with contractors and engineers, and with the public," Sauve said.

10-year process

The City is developing a planning process that will identify capital needs on a 10-year timeline. And for that, it intends to involve the community extensively.

Internally, City staff will develop a 10-year outline of known and anticipated capital costs for internal and recurring costs, such as fleet and equipment replacements, and facility needs.

Externally, the CIP Team will work with the Planning Commission and City Council to identify key community representatives within City neighborhoods, with the aim of 3-4 from each neighborhood. The team will also develop a community needs survey to distribute throughout the City.

These surveys, along with neighbor-

hood meetings, should help identify trouble spots — poor drainage areas, paving needs, etc.

Each neighborhood representative group will ultimately identify its top 3-7 capital needs.

All of this information, internal and external, will become the new Capital Improvement Plan, and will include recordings of meetings and survey results.

The Planning Commission must first approve the plan for adoption, and then it will go to City Council for approval, with many opportunities for public comment.

"This approach will take time to develop, but it is essential to preserving our community while creating sustainability and resilience," Sauve said. "Adopting industry standards and developing community participation and buy-in are at the core of this process."

Safe Living Beaufort produces strong results

Safe Living Beaufort, an initiative that began in August 2023 to reduce crime in the City of Beaufort, has led to a significant decrease in many offenses across the City, a year of data shows.

The data reflects activity from September 2023 through August 2024. Reports of shots fired, assaults, larceny, drug offenses and weapons offenses were down across the board in multifamily apartment complexes, while engagement with police officers was up significantly.

The initiative began after a metadata analysis was conducted in June 2023 for shots fired incidents within the City of Beaufort. The analysis showed that many of the incidents were taking place around multifamily apartment complexes. Further, four out of five homicides in 2023 occurred in apartment complexes.

The department launched its Safe Living initiative at Spanish Trace Apartments, an 88-unit complex on Southside Boulevard, in August of 2023. This comprehensive effort included a detailed incident data review analyzing years of data, an on-site risk terrain modeling assessment to determine environmental factors that contributed to crime — such as poor lighting and obscured access routes — collaboration with apartment managers and residents, and input from officers.

The department’s goal was to reduce crime and the number of calls for service by 10% in six months, and immediately increase the presence of officers at Spanish Trace, Beaufort Police Chief Stephenie Price and Capt. Joseph Dobbins said at a Neighborhood Association meeting at City Hall. But results have been much more dramatic.

The department set up a sub-station at Spanish Trace. Master Sgt. Sean Flomer was assigned as community liaison. “We trained officers in multi-housing crime prevention. We held community meetings and asked for feedback from residents and their expectations of us,” Price said.

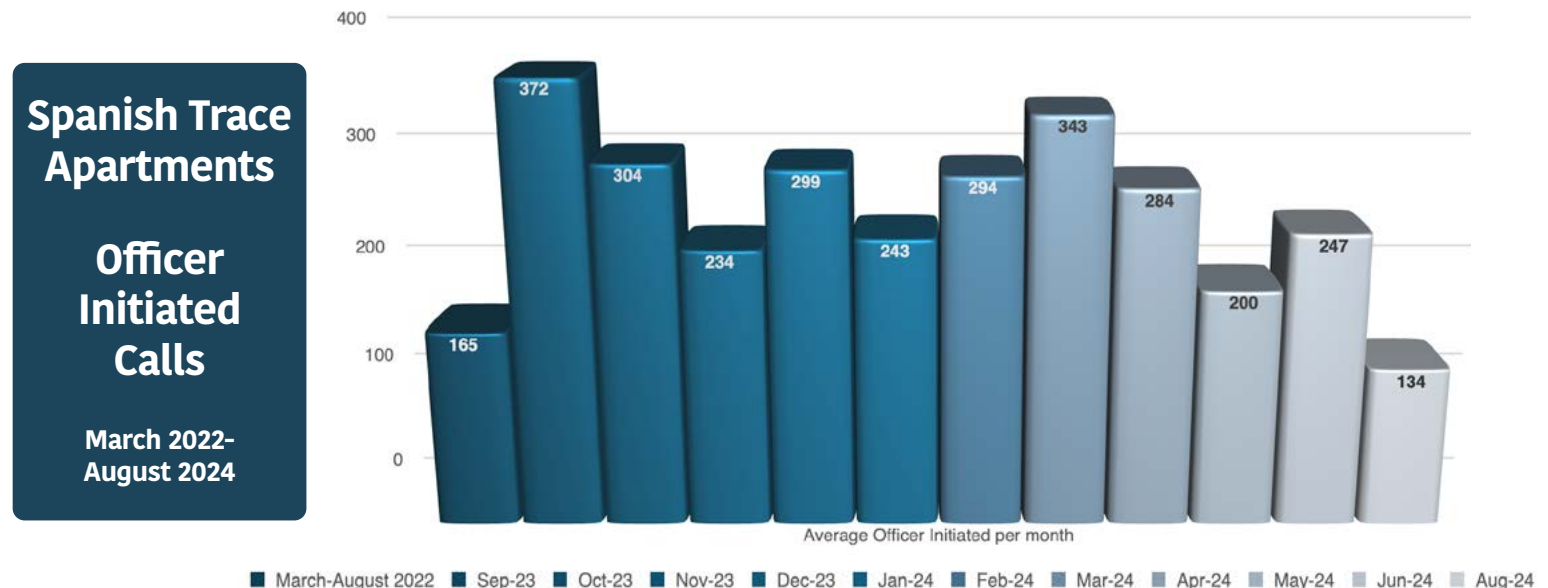
All levels of the department conducted regular foot and vehicle patrols, often with K9 officers. Residents got to know the officers, which helped improve relations between residents and the Police Department. Social events were also held — Chill with a Cop, Movie Nights — to encourage positive interactions between the police and residents.

“Our continued focus will be on crime prevention, increased visibility, and quick responses to ever-evolving challenges, always prioritizing the safety of our citizens.”

Stephenie Price, Beaufort Police Chief



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A year at Spanish Trace

A year's data shows that officer-initiated actions at Spanish Trace went from an average of 165 per month before the initiative began to an average of 257 over 12 months, an increase of 56%. Other averages for the year include:

- Calls for service/major crimes: From 46/month to 1.50/month, down 97%
- Shots fired: From 5/month to 0.42, down 92%
- Assaults: From 15/month to 1.42, down 91%
- Drug offenses: From 3/month to 0.42, down 86%
- Larceny: From 1/month to 0.58, down 42%
- Weapons offenses: from 4/month to 0.42, down 90%

From Spanish Trace, the department expanded the program to Cross Creek Apartments, Mossy Oaks Village Apartments, and recently, Wilderness Cove Apartments.

Price said that several key achievements have come out of Safe Living Beaufort, including:

Officer-initiated activities

A significant rise was reported in officer-initiated actions, with some months showing increases of over 500%. The rise in these activities is indicative of increased police presence and proactive patrolling, which likely contributed to the reduction in crime.

The highest spike was in August 2024, where officer-initiated actions reached 193 actions (585% increase).

Reduction in major crimes

Calls for Service/Major Crimes saw consistent reductions, with many months reporting a 100% decrease. This indicates that serious crimes such as assaults, drug offenses, and weapons offenses were effectively minimized or eradicated most months.

Assaults were reduced by as much as 100% in some months, particularly from March through July 2024. Only minor fluctuations were observed, showing the overall success in controlling violent incidents.

Large reduction in property crimes

Larceny incidents also saw significant reductions, dropping to zero in several months. This improvement can be attributed to increased awareness and officer vigilance in these areas, resulting in the prevention of property-related crimes.

Weapons offenses

No significant weapons-related incidents were reported



The smiles on these faces say it all as Capt. Joe Dobbs and a couple of young friends enjoy a Chill with a Cop event.

throughout much of the year. This is a crucial marker of enhanced community safety.

Sustained decrease in shots fired

Consistently, there were no shots fired incidents across the majority of the months reported. This suggests that the program has effectively curtailed firearms-related violence.

“Working closely with local residents over the past year, the Beaufort Police Department has made significant strides in reducing crime and improving community safety through increased officer engagement and proactive policing,” Price said. “We have achieved substantial reductions in major crimes, assaults, and property offenses. Moving forward and understanding that crime fluctuates and can migrate, we will expand this adaptable framework to other areas, utilizing advanced technology, fostering community engagement, and relying on our officers’ commitment to safety.”



Never leave the stove unattended.

Stay in the kitchen while you are frying, grilling, or broiling food. If you leave, turn off the stove.



Pat's parade passion pays off for Beaufort

Pat Harvey-Palmer is known as the “Queen of Parades,” and for good reason. This entrepreneur, longtime community volunteer, and all-around exemplary Beaufort citizen has put her logistical smarts to work by organizing and managing three major parades in Beaufort: The Water Festival Parade, Veterans Day Parade, and the Christmas Parade. And she's quick to tell you she's partial toward the Christmas Parade.

And why not! The kids with their big smiles, the families lining the road, and all those school bands, cheer teams, Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, float after float, and of course, the best Santa and Mrs. Claus, sitting atop a Beaufort Port Royal Fire Engine at the very end of the parade.

It's the perfect end for the first weekend in December, which starts with Night on the Town on Friday, is followed by the Gullah Christmas Festival and Lighted Boat Parade on Saturday, and then the parade on Sunday afternoon.

“I'm passionate about parades,” Pat says. “It's for the community, and people love parades. But you've got to care about it to make it work.”

Pat, who spent her formative years in Lima, Peru, where her father worked for Sears, moved to Beaufort with her first husband, a Marine, in 1966. In 1978, she moved back permanently, a single mom with two children. She worked as a secretary for a real estate firm and fell



Pat Harvey-Palmer has been in charge of putting together parades in Beaufort for the last 15 years.

in love with the profession. In 1992, she founded her own company, Hometown Realty, which she still manages today. In 1988, she married Jim Palmer, whom she fondly calls her house husband.

She's been active in the Beaufort Lions Club for more than 30 years, which is the organization involved in the various parades. She's also a charter member of the Lady's Island Business & Professional

“You've got to care about it to make it work.”

*Pat Harvey-Palmer,
parade organizer*

Organization, which began in 1981, and a 23-year commissioner for the Lady's Island-St. Helena Fire District.

That's a lot on anyone's plate. Somehow, Pat finds time to organize parades in her spare time.

It began with the Water Festival Parade around 15 years ago. “I made myself in charge,” she says, after figuring out the parade could be better managed. “Last year I began to organize the Veterans Day Parade, and we had 30 more participants than ever before. We'll have even more this year.”

The Christmas Parade, because of its size (close to 200 participants in 2023), demands particular attention to detail. Pat sends out applications to all past participants, plus any new ones who express interest. About two weeks before the parade, which will be held on Sunday, Dec. 8, this year, she has all the participants nailed down on her spreadsheet. Then she can start planning.

Planning involves, of course, lining up the participants on different streets that will feed into other streets. But it also means making sure that participants who have animals aren't adjacent to marching bands, whose noise might upset the animals. It means making sure Porta-Potties are lined up near where there are likely to be a lot of kids. It means being flexible, when the dimensions of a float turn out to be a lot different than what she was told.

For years, Adventure Street has been the point from which the parade participants flow into and from as they make their way to Boundary Street. “I line them up and they fall in at various points,” she says.



Beaufort High School cheerleaders enjoy the annual Christmas Parade.

Continued on next page

Shopping delights

Start your holiday shopping with **Small Business Saturday on Nov. 30** and **Artists Sunday on Dec. 1**. Patronize Beaufort establishments on both days!

Give something special, unique, and handcrafted this holiday season and support local artists and the local economy. A special “pop-up” artisan market at the historic Arsenal and Downtown Beaufort art galleries are the go-to place for everyone to “shop art” on Artists Sunday. That’s the Sunday after Thanksgiving – Dec. 1 – from noon to 4 p.m. The live music, food trucks, and artist booths with live demonstrations happening throughout the day are made possible by the Freedman Arts District, BAHA, CVB, and the Cultural District Advisory Board.



The Lady’s Island Middle School band is one of the many bands that participate in the parade.

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Lions Club members show up three hours before the parade starts to help Pat get everyone in place, especially those who appear lost. She also credits one other group as crucial to her success – the Beaufort Radio Amateurs Group (BRAG), ham radio operators who can reach out to one another during the parade to relay an important message or an unexpected change. With her biggest challenge being “communications,” it makes sense that BRAG helps make the show run more smoothly.

Pat is out even earlier, coning off Green and Adventure Streets and parts of Boundary Street.

Pat has organized two special parades as well – the 100th anniversary of Parris Island Marine Corps Depot, celebrated in Port Royal in 2015, in which she solicited military equipment for the past 100 years that could be put on floats. In 2013, Beaufort welcomed American Idol winner and local Candice Glover. For that parade, Pat’s insistence that it start on time took a back seat to waiting for the governor to arrive. Then-Gov. Nikki Haley was running late, and the parade could not start until she got there.

“There can be a lot of problems behind the scenes in a parade,” Pat says, “but the people who are lined up probably never know about it.”

Holiday Weekend Happenings

**Some times may be tentative*

Friday, Dec. 6

Night on the Town

Streets will close at 3:30 p.m. Merchants will be open, most offering complimentary food and drinks. There will be plenty of food booths on Bay Street, and downtown restaurants will be open.

- Christmas music and caroling throughout evening
- The Parris Island Marine Corps Band, concert stage, Charles and Bay streets
- 6 p.m., Santa photos begin
- 6 p.m., movie on Bay
- 8 p.m., “The Night Before Christmas” reading
- 8:30 p.m., tree lighting with snow!

Saturday, Dec. 7

Sea Island Gullah Christmas Celebration

Celebrate and honor Gullah holiday traditions from 11 a.m.-4 p.m. with the Gullah Taste of Christmas and Rice Cook-off.

Lighted Boat Parade

The Boat Parade, hosted by the Beaufort Water festival, begins at 5:30 p.m. Grab a seat along the seawall at Waterfront Park.

Sunday, Dec. 8

The annual Christmas Parade begins at 3 p.m. and typically concludes about 5 p.m. Santa rounds it out as he sits atop a Beaufort-Port Royal fire truck.



What our bonds have financed

Local governments across the United States use bond debt to help finance large capital projects and purchases, and the City of Beaufort is no exception. Bonds are an integral part of municipal finance. They allow the City to undertake important projects and make capital purchases that it otherwise would not have enough resources to accomplish. The decision to bond is made based on current municipal needs and expected future revenues to support repayment.

The City uses Pope Flynn, LLC as its bond counsel firm to guide through the bond process. Bonds are issued as of a certain date, and mature at a date in the future, by which time the bond is expected to be repaid in full.

Investor.gov, a website run by the Securities and Exchange Commission, defines these two types of bonds:

- A general obligation bond is backed by the “full faith and credit” of the issuer, which has the power to tax residents to pay bondholders.
- A revenue bond is backed by revenues from a specific project or source, such as highway tolls or lease fees.

These are the current bonds held by the City of Beaufort:

◆ A \$9,785,000 general obligation bond issued in April 2016. It has an outstanding balance of \$4,460,000, with an expected retirement date of February 2031. This bond was issued to refinance \$9,250,000 of 2008 outstanding bonds for the construction of City Hall and Police/Municipal Court Complex with lower interest rates. The remaining funds were used for various City capital improvements including sidewalk, streets, parks, City marina, and fire station facilities.

◆ A \$5,375,000 general obligation bond issued in December 2021. It has an outstanding balance of \$5,027,000 with an expected retirement date of June 2037. This bond was used for the purchase of the new fire station on Robert Smalls Parkway and a building for cybersecurity education located on Boundary Street.

◆ A \$7,400,000 limited obligation bond for stormwater capital improvements issued in September 2020. It has an outstanding balance of \$6,155,000 with an expected retirement date of July 2040. The bond proceeds were for stormwater improvements to Mossy Oaks Basin 1 and 2 along with the Allison Road streetscape and drainage project.

◆ A \$3,500,000 revenue bond for Waterfront Park capital improvements issued in July 2011. It has an outstanding balance of \$862,025 with an expected retirement date of July 2026. This revenue bond was used to fund designing and construction improvements to Waterfront Park.

◆ A \$7,100,000 revenue bond for Southside Park and Washington Street Park capital improvements issued in January 2024. It has an outstanding balance of \$7,100,000 with principal payments beginning in fiscal year 2025 and an expected retirement date of February 2039. Southside Park Phase 1, which includes playgrounds and a pavilion, is expected to be completed by the end of the year. Washington Street Park improvements will include an open-air pavilion, a



Bonds have helped to finance the construction of City Hall, the Mossy Oaks stormwater project, the fire station property on Robert Smalls Parkway, and improvements to Washington Street Park, including a new pavilion.



WASHINGTON STREET PARK - PROPOSED PAVILION
BEAUFORT, SOUTH CAROLINA
JANUARY 2024

planiscape
DAVIS & FLOYD
SINCE 1984

multipurpose court, and stormwater improvements. A contract for this work is expected to be signed this year.

City's Aa2 Credit Rating

Investors in municipal bonds use credit ratings to assess creditworthiness, or the ability and willingness of the state or local government issuing the bond to pay investors their money back, plus interest.

According to Moody's rating agency, the City has a very strong credit position. The City's Aa2 rating is slightly above the median rating of Aa3 for U.S. cities. Notable credit factors include a robust financial position, healthy tax base, and sound wealth and income profile. The stronger the bond rating, the lower the interest rates on new borrowings. The City has leveraged this bond rating to reduce debt service payments and the impact to taxpayers.

Further details of the City's debt service can be found in the City's Annual Comprehensive Financial Report for fiscal year ended June 30, 2023, in the long-term debt section beginning on page D-21 and accessed through 2023-ACFR (cityofbeaufort.org).



Beaufort Code changes being considered

When the City of Beaufort adopted the Beaufort Development Code in 2017, it was heralded as a form-based code that was forward thinking. It created a regulatory framework where architecture and a walkable urban form are the core requirements for approving any development request. In fact, Beaufort was one of the first cities in the country to adopt such an advanced land use code.

“While such innovation has many benefits,” said Community Development Director Curt Freese, “one of the challenges of being at the forefront is that such innovation can create unintended issues not foreseen at adoption.”

And that’s exactly what happened in Beaufort.

“Stakeholders, from developers, board and council members to staff members and others, all identified numerous issues that this innovative code either created or had not addressed,” Freese said. But changes were not made in a methodical manner until the City committed to devoting one Work Session a month to bring forward amendments to the Code, which must be approved by both the Planning Commission and City Council before they can take effect.

More than a year went into this process (March 2023 through June 2024), and the Planning Commission is still considering a number of amendments. But huge strides have been made. The result has been a significant refresh of the code, which totals well over 200 pages of edits and revisions.

“These revisions tackled not only errors and inconsistencies, but citizen-derived issues, such as increasing open space and preventing clear-cutting for new development and refreshing the historic preservation guidelines,” Freese said. “We also streamlined the development process for citizens and developers alike with the creation of a new City Planning Commission to approve development, and adding standards and public hearings to the development process for transparency.”

“As the Planning Commission goes through all of these changes, the citizens of Beaufort can be assured that good design and preserving the natural and



The Planning Commission discusses code changes at a recent meeting.

“Good design and preserving the natural and built environment are all the centerpiece of the revisions.”

Curt Freese
Community Development Director

built environment are all the centerpiece of the revisions,” Freese said. Once the major changes are approved, the City will begin a yearly update process for minor revisions, which will always be open to the citizens.

Among the major changes:

Adding public involvement & additional infrastructure standards

Major changes to subdivision standards, that is the in-depth technical and procedural requirements from everything from minor subdivisions to major subdivisions. These changes will add detailed survey, engineering, and procedural re-

quirements for each development. They will also include adding public meetings for all developments. *Under consideration by Planning Commission.*

Protecting trees & preventing clear-cutting

Citizens have expressed concerns about protecting the beautiful trees and environment of the City. To that end, the changes would require protecting existing tree canopies with every development with innovative new tree standards. *Still to be considered by Planning Commission.*

Clear historic preservation standards

The Code Edit Work Sessions spent more than a year revising complicated and unclear historic preservation standards. The goal was to create clear processes and rules for all projects within the Historic District. *Awaiting action by City Council.*

Design standards

Major updates to design standards in all districts. These updates are proposed to provide more predictability and to correct inconsistencies. *Will be considered in 2025.*



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Police Chief	Stephenie Price	843-322-7900	sprice@cityofbeaufort.org
Public Works Director	Nate Farrow	843-525-7094	nfarrow@cityofbeaufort.org

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2023-2025 STRATEGIC PLAN



The Beacon

Fall 2024