



**FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
THURSDAY, JANUARY 8, 2026 – 9:00 A.M. – 5:00 P.M.
FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2026 – 9:00 A.M. – 2:00 P.M.
THE GEORGE HOTEL
615 FRONT STREET, GEORGETOWN, SC 29440**

MEMBERS PRESENT

Mayor Lethonia Barnes, Mayor Pro Tempore George Jebaily, Councilman Chaquez T. McCall, Councilman Bryan A. Braddock, Councilwoman LaShonda NeSmith-Jackson, Councilman J. Lawrence Smith, II and Councilman Zach McKay (via telephone)

ALSO PRESENT

Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager; Mr. Ronald Scott, City Attorney; Mr. Luke Carter, City Attorney; Mrs. Casey Moore, Municipal Clerk; Ms. Patrice Rankin, Assistant City Clerk; Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager of Development; Mr. Glenn Bodenheimer, Interim Finance Director; Interim Police Chief Stephen Starling, Florence Police Department; Chief Shannon Tanner, Florence Fire Department; Mrs. Jennifer Krawiec, Director of Human Resources; Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Utility Operations; Mr. Josh Whittington, Director of Utility Operations; Mr. Michael Hemingway, Director of Utility Planning and Economic Development; Mrs. Victoria Nash, Director of Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism; Mrs. Amanda Pope, Director of Marketing/Communications and Municipal Services and Mr. Adam Swindler, Director of Public Works

Notices of this Work Session of City Council were provided to the media and individuals requesting a copy of the agenda informing them of the date, location and time of the meeting.

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CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Barnes called the Thursday, January 8, 2026 Work Session of Florence City Council to order at 9:07a.m.

INVOCATION

Mayor Barnes gave the invocation for the meeting. The pledge of allegiance to the American Flag followed the invocation.

WORK SESSION

Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager, opened the session and said his budget philosophy is that staff has an unwavering commitment to ensuring the city is delivering high-quality services and is responsive to the needs and concerns of our residents. How do we do this?



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1. Develop operational budgets within projected available revenues.
2. Focus on goals of Comprehensive Plan:
 - Growth Capacity
 - Land Use and Development
 - Housing and Neighborhoods
 - Transportation
 - Economic Development
 - Recreation and Amenities
3. Invest strategically in employees by providing adequate pay, benefits, training, technology resources, support, etc.
4. Balance reinvestment in the City's existing infrastructure and facilities with the creation of new opportunities for investing in the future of the City.
5. Maintain a minimum General Fund balance of at least 30% of the General Fund budget.
6. Maintain sufficient working capital in the utility funds.

Mr. Davis gave an overview of the meeting agenda:

1. FY 2024-2025 Year End Financial Review
 - The General Fund
 - Water and Sewer Fund
 - Storm Water Utility Fund
 - Debt
2. FY 2026-2027 Budget Influencers
3. Municipality Funding Sources
4. City Manager's Office/City Center Market
5. Human Resources
6. Police
7. Fire
 - Building Department
8. Public Works
 - Beautification and Facilities
 - Equipment Maintenance
 - Sanitation
9. Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism
10. Utilities Department
11. Water & Sewer Master Planning & Economic Development
12. Utilities Quarterly Update
13. Community Services
14. Growth and Development
15. Housing Needs Assessment
16. Residential Development
17. Projects Update
18. Artificial Intelligence
19. Opioid Funding Discussion
20. Discussion & Questions

Mr. Davis reviewed the First Principle of Public Finance which includes promoting accountability, creating value with public money, ensuring fairness, upholding stewardship of public resources, championing financial resiliency and being a decision architect. Mr. Davis also mentioned that a Capital Improvement Plan will be provided for Council's consideration on the General Fund side. He noted that



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the Utility Fund has had a Capital Improvement Plan for some time now. This will be a first time for the General Fund and Mr. Davis noted that the city won't see the fruits of this plan until a few years due to building the plan up.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson inquired about what types of expenses could be covered under the Capital Improvement Plan. Mr. Davis explained that the funds could be used for Public Safety needs, such as purchasing a new fire truck or new police vehicles, as well as updating heavy equipment for the Public Works Department and other capital-related purchases. He also noted that funds could be set aside annually to help cover the cost of future capital purchases when they become necessary.

FY 2024-25 Year End Review

Mr. Glenn Bodenheimer, Interim Finance Director, reviewed the FY 2024-2025 audit results for the City of Florence. Mr. Bodenheimer shared that the City received an unmodified (“clean”) opinion. He also shared that the City ended fiscal year 2025 in a strong overall financial position, with total net position of \$248.1 million, reflecting the excess of assets over liabilities. Governmental activities increased net position by \$9.9 million, while business-type activities increased net position by \$12.9 million. Total net position increased by \$22.8 million during the year, demonstrating continued financial stability.

Highlights of the FY 2025 Annual Comprehensive Financial Plan:

- For the Fiscal Year ended June 30, 2025, the City’s General Fund reported a combined fund balance of \$42.9 million, an increase \$633,652.
- At year end, the City’s Governmental Funds reported total outstanding debt declined by \$13.1 million, a decrease of 6.2%.
- The City maintains strong credit ratings: AA- (Standard & Poor’s), Aa2 (Moody’s).
- Business-type activities increased net position by \$12.9 million. Utility rate adjustments implemented in FY 2024 to support capacity expansion, regulatory compliance and long-term system reliability.
- Utility revenues increased by approximately \$5.6 million (13.1%) compared to prior year.

The General Fund:

The following chart illustrates the General Fund Revenues in 2025 compared to 2024. Property tax revenue is up from 2024, as well as miscellaneous revenues and revenues from other funding sources.

General Fund Revenues

Revenues	2025	2024	% Variance
Property Tax	\$14,453,969	\$12,333,683	17.19%
Licenses, Permits, and Fees	18,646,775	18,358,492	1.57%
Intergovernmental	8,248,637	6,155,674	34.00%
Charges for Services	3,963,189	3,602,808	10.00%
Fines and Forfeitures	229,652	178,180	28.89%
Investment Earnings	966,680	1,072,640	-9.8%
Miscellaneous	1,339,207	640,574	109.06%
Other Funding Sources	314,221	392,392	-19.92%



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Transfers In	8,634,913	17,561,402	-50.83%
Total Revenues	\$56,797,243	\$60,295,845	-5.80%

Councilman McKay asked about the total revenue generated from the rental registry. Mr. Clint Moore, Assistant City Manager Clint, explained that revenue was approximately \$7,700 in 2021, increased to about \$15,000 in 2022 as compliance improved, then decreased to just over \$10,000 in 2023 and 2024, which was expected since owners with five or more units only pay the permit fee once. Revenue rose again to around \$15,000 in 2025 after additional compliance efforts. Councilman McKay expressed concern that, if not fully utilized, the registry could seem like an unnecessary tax. Mr. Moore responded that the city has seen positive impacts in working with property owners to bring properties into compliance without shutting down residential units. Following discussion among Council and staff, Mayor Barnes requested that Council convene at a later date to further review and discuss the rental registry.

The following chart illustrated the General Fund Expenditures in 2025 compared to 2024. Total expenditures have decreased approximately 1.7%.

General Fund Expenditures

Expenditures	2025	2024	% Variance
General Government	\$ 6,193,335	\$ 5,627,764	10.05%
Public Safety	19,408,287	18,316,189	5.96%
Public Works	8,725,381	7,950,334	9.75%
Culture and Recreation	5,491,315	4,240,104	29.51%
Community Development	385,800	392,201	-1.63%
Non-Departmental	6,299,663	6,439,019	-2.16%
Debt Service: Principal	2,321,651	1,851,053	25.42%
Debt Service: Interest	847,556	1,000,891	-15.32%
Capital Outlay	7,970,749	12,819,814	-37.82%
Total Expenditures	\$57,643,737	\$58,637,369	-1.69%

Water and Sewer Fund:

The following chart illustrates the Water and Sewer Fund Revenues in 2025 compared to 2024. Total Revenues have increased approximately 14%.

Water & Sewer Fund Revenues

Revenues	2025	2024	% Variance
Current Use Charges	\$48,095,823	\$42,511,041	13.1%
Service Fee	56,806	7,202	688.8%
Miscellaneous	966,454	792,099	22.0%
Water & Sewer Tap Fees	1,299,312	1,209,086	7.5%
Investment Earnings	2,130,244	2,495,572	-14.6%



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Other Miscellaneous Revenue	36,750	72,300	-49.2%
Intergovernmental	3,961,113	1,154,030	243.2%
Gain on Asset Disposal	26,301	243,708	-89.2%
Contributed Capital	3,176,320	4,142,580	-23.3%
Total Revenues	\$59,749,123	\$52,627,618	13.5%

The following chart illustrates the Water and Sewer Fund Expenditures in 2025 compared to 2024. Total Expenditures have increased approximately 10%.

Water & Sewer Fund Expenditures

Expenses	2025	2024	% Variance
Personnel	\$7,470,989	\$6,341,871	17.8%
Employee Benefits	3,132,430	2,837,569	10.4%
Engineering	272,792	284,009	-3.9%
Utility Finance	619,178	590,794	4.8%
Wastewater Treatment	5,041,846	5,219,424	-3.4%
Water Production	4,418,129	3,744,643	18.0%
Distribution Operations	1,886,102	1,090,236	73.0%
Collection Operations	901,814	807,997	11.6%
Non-Departmental	2,028,217	2,728,711	-25.7%
Depreciation	11,243,190	10,148,298	10.8%
Economic Development	3,090,456	2,187,287	41.3%
Interest Expense	3,601,776	2,426,054	48.5%
Issuance Costs	362,336	435,329	-16.8%
Transfers	4,726,777	5,425,155	-12.9%
Total Expenditures	\$48,796,032	\$44,267,377	10.2%

Storm Water Utility Fund:

The following chart illustrates the Storm Water Utility Fund Revenues for 2025 compared to 2024. Revenues have decreased approximately 18%.

Storm Water Fund Revenues

Revenues	2025	2024	% Variance
Storm Water Service Fee	\$ 1,661,771	\$ 1,637,489	1.48%
Miscellaneous	22,280	32,647	-31.75%
Investment Earnings	273,198	287,353	-4.93%
Intergovernmental	200,583	110,041	82.28%
Gain/(Loss) on Disposals	14,799	71,510	-79.30%



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Capital Contributions	950,600	1,689,420	-43.73%
Total Revenues	\$3,123,231	\$3,828,460	-18.42%

The following chart illustrates the Storm Water Utility Fund Expenses for 2025 compared to 2024. Total expenses have decreased approximately 3%.

Storm Water Fund Expenditures

Expenses	2025	2024	% Variance
Personnel	\$269,269	\$434,116	-13.2%
Stormwater Operations	336,500	502,536	-11.3%
Depreciation and Amortization	380,726	330,956	47.3%
Interest Expense	97,136	104,439	-6.4%
Transfers Out	123,831	120,701	10.1%
Total Expenses	\$ 1,207,462	\$1,492,748	-2.5%

There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the Storm Water Utility Fund.

Outstanding Debt:

Mr. Bodenheimer went over current outstanding debt. He said it is important to know the current debt, why municipal debt matters and what it means for the City of Florence. The City is analyzed by two rating agencies: Moody’s and Standard and Poors. The City has a rating of Aa2 with Moody’s and a rating of AA- with Standard and Poors, meaning the City is in very good standing. Mr. Bodenheimer highlighted the current outstanding governmental debt and utilities debt for the City and their maturity dates.

There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the city’s outstanding debt. Pro tem Jebaily requested that a Stormwater Rate Study be conducted by staff to compare the City of Florence with other municipalities in the state and presented to the Business Development Meeting.

2027 Budget Influencers

External factors influencing the budget are inflation, the labor market, improved borrowing costs, residential growth and revenue uncertainty. The average inflation rate for 2025 was 2.7%, down from 2.9% in 2024. The Florence County unemployment rate is 5.3% compared to the South Carolina unemployment rate of 4.3% and the United States unemployment rate of 4.4%. Federal interest rates are projected to reduce their rate two times in 2025. Current federal rates average 4.5%-4.75% with projections of 4.8% in 2024 and 3.8% in 2025.

Mr. Glenn Bodenheimer, Interim Finance Director, went over Fiscal Year 2026-27 revenue and expenditure assumptions. It is assumed that property tax revenue will increase based off property tax assessments. Building permit revenue is down 11.6% from this time last year; however, it is too early to determine if this will continue but expectations are revenues will remain relatively flat. Business license revenue is 13.5%, but it is too early to determine if this trend will continue. Hospitality revenue is up 3.34%. Water revenue is up 10.3% and should continue to stay around this due to the rate increases. Sewer revenue is up 8.0%. Water and sewer rates will increase by 9% and 11% respectively, for inside



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city limit customers and outside customers for the Fiscal Year 2027. Operational and capital costs will continue to rise as a result of wage inflation, labor market conditions, interest rates and borrowing costs, and the impacts of tariffs.

[Break: 11:05am – 11:20am]

Mr. Bodenheimer highlighted the Municipality Funding Sources for the City which include property taxes, business licenses/franchise fees, building permits, local government fund, local taxes (local option sales tax, local accommodations taxes), grants and bonds/debt.

Mr. Bodenheimer reviewed the city’s Business License Declining Rate Structure. Declining rates for business licenses mean the tax percentage decreases as a business’s gross income climbs past certain thresholds, so larger revenue earners pay a slightly smaller rate per thousand (effective tax rate), even through their total tax bill rises. The intention is to prevent disproportionate taxation of very large businesses and maintain competitiveness for high-sales-volume operations. The design of the declining rate structure significantly impacts equity and revenues. The current structure is highly favorable to large manufacturers, big box retailers, distribution and logistics operations and functions as an implicit incentive, not a targeted policy. The chart below illustrates the City’s current Declining Rate Structure:

Bracket	% Charge	# Customers
\$0-\$1M	100%	2,110
\$1M-\$4M	90%	419
\$4M-\$7M	75%	60
\$7M-\$10M	50%	31
\$10M-\$20M	25%	25
\$25M+	10%	25

Mr. Bodenheimer presented three policy options for Council’s consideration regarding a Business License Declining Rate Structure:

Policy Option 1: MASC Model Ordinance

- Smaller brackets; shrinks brackets to \$1M increments
- Caps maximum discount at 60%
- Widely used across South Carolina and aligns Florence with peer municipalities

Revenue impact:

- Prior year: \$4,650,707
- Revised: \$6,068,262
- Increase: \$1,417,555

Bracket	% Charge	# Customers
\$0-\$1M	100%	2,110
\$1M-\$2M	90%	273
\$2M-\$3M	80%	95
\$3M-\$4M	70%	51
\$4M+	60%	141



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Policy Option 2: Additional Upper Tiers

- Slows the rate of decline
- Maintains incentive structure but moderates the extreme outliers
- Puts a cap at 50% vs. the current 10% for business over \$20M

Revenue impact:

- Prior year: \$4,650,707
- Revised: \$6,065,554
- Increase: \$1,414,847

Bracket	% Charge	# Customers
\$0-\$1M	100%	2,110
\$1M-\$4M	90%	419
\$4M-\$7M	80%	60
\$7M-\$10M	70%	31
\$10M-\$20M	60%	25
\$20M+	50%	25

Policy Option 3: Small Business Oriented

- Caps highest tier at \$7M (small business friendly)
- Maintains incentive structure but moderates the extreme outliers
- Puts a cap at 60% vs. the current 50% for businesses over \$7M

Revenue impact:

- Prior year: \$4,650,707
- Revised: \$6,231,946
- Increase: \$1,581,239

Bracket	% Charge	# Customers
\$0-\$1M	100%	2,110
\$1M-\$3M	90%	368
\$3M-\$5M	80%	79
\$5M-\$7M	70%	32
\$7M+	60%	81

Mr. Bodenheimer and Mr. Davis noted that this information was presented to the Finance, Audit and Budget Committee at a previous meeting. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the Business License Declining Rate Structure and proposed policy options.

Florence County Penny Sales Tax IV

Mr. Bodenheimer provided what the City can and cannot do regarding the 1% Capital Projects Sales Tax. He shared that the City cannot enact a city sales tax without a change in state law. The City can receive Capital Project Sales Tax (CPST) revenue through the County. There is no statutory minimum or maximum on how much CPST funding Florence can receive. CPST allocations are determined by county leadership, any commission created, and voters; however, a commission is not legally required.



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Mr. Moore shared that the CPST IV Referendum is in November 2028. The City would provide a list of projects in 2027 to Florence County. Florence County will appoint a six-member commission and vote by summer 2028 to place on the November 2028 ballot a measure to reimpose the 1% sales tax, beginning May 1, 2029 and funds are provided by summer 2029. Potential projects for the CPST IV include \$50M for groundwater treatment plant rehabilitation, \$20M for Jeffries Creek Interceptor (Phase II), \$15M water line rehabilitation, \$28M Florence-Timmonsville Interceptor, \$7.5 Fire Station and associated equipment, \$20M road improvements, \$15M corridor improvements (Irby Street, Church Street, Palmetto Street), \$15M trail improvements and \$15M stormwater projects. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the Penny Sales Tax.

General Fund Capital Equipment Replacement Plan

Mr. Bodenheimer presented the General Fund Capital Equipment Replacement Plan for Council’s consideration. The proposed annual contribution for this plan is \$1.44M. He shared that dedicated annual contribution smooths costs over time, avoids emergency purchases and supports fiscal sustainability. The assets covered by this plan include 3 patrol vehicles for the Police Department; 2 ladder trucks, 6 fire engines and 1 rescue truck for the Fire Department; dump trucks, backhoes/loaders and an asphalt truck for Beautification/Public Works and 4 commercial sanitation trucks for Sanitation.

Mr. Bodenheimer shared that stormwater user fee revenues are no longer sufficient to cover operating expenses, debt service and required fund transfers resulting in a growing structural funding gap. A stormwater user fee increase is needed in the upcoming budget year to maintain service levels and financial stability. A rate study similar to the Water and Sewer rate will be conducted to review the city’s stormwater user fees to implement a 10-year replacement plan.

Human Resources

Mrs. Jennifer Krawiec, Human Resources Director, emphasized that employees are the most important part of the organization. She said that Human Resources is committed to recruiting, retaining, and investing in employees while competing with government and private sector jobs, as well as other geographic locations.

Mrs. Krawiec also provided an overview of compensation strategies, highlighting the importance of annual cost-of-living and merit increases to maintain competitive starting salaries and prevent salary compression. She also shared the benefits that the City currently offers to employees to include healthcare, retention bonuses for some departments and an employee finders fee.

Calendar Year	Inflation Rate	Fiscal Year	COL Increase	Merit Increase
2016	1.3%	2016-17	2.0%	2.0% and 4.0%
2017	2.1%	2017-18	1.0%	2.0% & 4.0%
2018	2.4%	2018-19	1.0%	2.0% & Bonus
2019	1.8%	2019-20	2.0%	2.0%
2020	1.2%	2020-21	2.0%	2.0% & 4.0%
2021	4.7%	2021-22	2.0%	2.0% & Bonus
2022	8.0%	2022-23	2.0%	2.0% & Bonus
2023	4.1%	2023-24	8.0%	0.0%
2024	2.7%	2024-25	4.0%	2.0% & Bonus
2025	3.0%	2025-26	4.0%	0.0%



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Mrs. Krawiec discussed compensation challenges the City faces. Regarding the Police Department, this year's 4% cost of living increase allowed the compensation for non-certified and certified officers to continue to be competitive with surrounding agencies.

The City offers benefit opportunities to include PEBA health insurance, state retirement, an onsite nurse practitioner, and paid retiree insurance.

Mrs. Krawiec said some concepts that are currently implemented to assist with recruitment and retention include a higher finder's fee for key positions; bus wrap with Pee Dee Regional Transportation Authority (PDRTA); hiring events/career fairs; new promotional videos. Advertising is expensive, yet the City's top recruiting methods are digital outreach and personal connections.

There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the reappointment of city judges.

City Manager's Office

Mrs. Amanda Pope, Director of Marketing, Communications, and Municipal Services, provided an update on the City's Marketing and Promotions 2025 recap. In 2025, the City shared 17 Florence in Focus videos, published numerous awareness campaigns, maintained the Interactive Water Management Portal, held two sessions of City University, with the first session of Youth City U being held in Fall 2025, completed and launched website redesign in February 2025 and updated to a new domain (www.cityofflorencesc.gov) in October 2025.

Mrs. Pope provided an overview of Municipal Services 2025, highlighting several key initiatives and updates. She reported progress on the comprehensive recodification of the City's Code of Ordinances. Once CivicPlus completes the final edits, the City will move forward with printing and distributing the updated Code, a process expected to take approximately 2 – 3 months. The adopting ordinance is projected to go before Council for approval in late spring/early summer 2026. Mrs. Pope also shared that implementation of the new Agenda Management Solution is ongoing. Staff training on agenda creation is underway, with full operational use anticipated in February 2026. In addition, she highlighted several Employee Wellness Program initiatives, including the 10th annual Flo Town 5K, participation in the Pee Dee Heart Walk, the Full Forward Fitness program, and the Earth Day cleanup walk.

Mrs. Pope outlined proposed citywide initiatives from the City Manager's Office, including updating the Christmas decorations along the I-20/David McLeod Boulevard corridor and developing new city branding. She noted that the existing holiday decorations, installed in the early to mid-2000s, are due for replacement. The estimated cost for new decorations and garland ranges from \$150,000 to \$200,000. Additionally, the City is considering refreshing its branding. She said that a community's brand is more than just a name, logo, or tagline; it represents a shared promise, shaped by every interaction and experience within the community. The current "Full Life, Full Forward Florence" brand was launched in April 2017, and the estimated cost for development and implementation of new branding is between \$100,000 and \$150,000. Mr. Davis added that, if Council chooses to proceed, these initiatives could be funded through the 30% early purchases allocation.

Mrs. Pope provided an update on the City Center Farmers Market. She shared that the market received a \$1,250 Art Support Grant from the South Carolina Arts Commission to fund a mural on the dumpster enclosure. She also outlined several future needs, including general maintenance costing approximately \$50,000 to \$100,000; a new entrance sign at Darlington and Sanborn Streets costing approximately \$20,000; an additional permanent shed costing approximately \$85,000; and a software management program costing approximately \$5,000 to \$6,000.



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Mrs. Pope also provided an update on the Commercial Kitchen. She discussed the number of current users, future considerations such as the repair or replacement of commercial kitchen equipment, and shared success stories from former kitchen users. Mr. Davis reminded Council that requests for repairs/maintenance could be funded with the 30% early purchases funding.

[Recess for lunch: 1:02pm – 2:01pm]

[Councilman McKay, via telephone, left the meeting at 1:02pm.]

Police Department

Captain Stephen Starling, Interim Police Chief, presented the 2025 call volume report, crime statistics, and an update on downtown patrol coverage. He reported that the Florence Police Department responded to just under 58,000 calls for service during the year and that overall violent crime has decreased by approximately 13% compared to 2024.

Mr. Davis asked Captain Starling what he attributes to the reduction in crime. Captain Starling cited the department's continued investment in technology, including FLOCK cameras and other technological resources, as key factors contributing to the decline. He also noted that the department achieved a 100% homicide clearance rate for 2024 cases and currently stands at 99% for 2025. Regarding downtown patrol coverage, Class III and CAT officers rotate through the area as availability allows throughout their shifts. The department plans to add an additional CAT officer in January 2026. In addition, Captain Barley and Lieutenant Watts conduct foot patrols at various times during the day to enhance the department's downtown presence.

Captain Starling reviewed the life expectancy of a patrol vehicle. The goal is to keep a patrol vehicle for 5 years and/or 90,000-100,000 miles but it's actually 3-4 years and/or 60,000-75,000 miles. The biggest factor in the life expectancy of patrol vehicles is engine hours. The average patrol vehicle can have over 3,000 engine idle hours within years of use. This is the equivalent of 90,000 miles. Captain Starling shared that the Police Department has on average 50 vehicles that are used for daily response services and another 20-25 vehicles are utilized by specialty units. The Police Department received \$480,000 in state grant funding, which allowed the Police Department to purchase 1 transport vehicle and 1 K-9 patrol vehicle. 2 crime scene trucks and 3 unmarked vehicles were also purchased for Administrative positions such as Evidence, Victim's Advocate and community services.

Captain Starling said the approximate cost for a patrol vehicle is \$80,000, with the vehicle costing approximately \$50,000 and upfitting costs around \$30,000. The Police Department is requesting 5 patrol vehicles, approximately costing \$400,000. He shared that the best method for cycling vehicles is to purchase 3-5 vehicles per year which will allow a turnover of approximately one quarter of the fleet every 4 years.

Councilman Braddock raised concerns about Police Department vehicles being stored in an open lot, noting that from both a safety and appearance standpoint, the vehicles should be housed in a warehouse or other enclosed storage facility. He expressed concern that the current arrangement could create a negative public perception. Captain Starling responded that most of the vehicles in the lot are either out of service or designated as spare vehicles and agreed with Councilman Braddock's concerns regarding storage and presentation.



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Captain Starling then presented a request for a firearm upgrade, approximately costing \$100,000. The firearm upgrade would include new weapons for the Police Department, as well as new holsters.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson inquired on how often the Police Department participates in firearm training. Captain Starling said the Department must complete annual certification with the state and officers are required to participate in a quarterly certification or training within the Department. It was suggested that the firearms upgrade could be purchased with the 30% early purchase funding.

Captain Starling then reviewed technology upgrades to include Clearview AI, five Panasonic toughbooks and three DJI avata drones. Additional technology upgrades include a Knightscope Emergency Call Box Tower for trails and remote areas, Knightscope Emergence E-Phone for parking garages, parking lots or alleyways and surveillance trailers, a security option for large events and temporary or long-term overwatch in specific need areas. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding technology upgrades for the Police Department.

Captain Starling then provided statistics for the Real Time Crime Center. Since the implementation of the Real Time Crime Center (RTCC), the Police Department has utilized FLOCK cameras and Drone as a First Responder (DFR) to improve the quality of service offered to the citizens through increased officer safety, improved information gathering for more adequate and prompt police response, low priority call clearances, reducing strain of resources and decreased lead time and increased clearance rates for reported crimes. The RTCC has been instrumental in the informational phases of investigating crimes and has played the primary role in numerous investigations resulting in arrests or felons.

Captain Starling shared the continued costs for the RTCC and options for the RTCC moving forward to include the FLOCK safe city program, a 10 year contract approximately \$3.9 million. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the RTCC and the FLOCK safe city program.

Fire Department

Mr. Shannon Tanner, Fire Chief, shared that the Fire Department averages about 4,400 calls per year. The Fire Department is about 40% medical and 60% fire related issues. Chief Tanner discussed the current and upcoming needs of the Fire Department. He began with an overview of the current status of the Fire Department. Chief Tanner said the Fire Department is currently running seven companies comprised of six Engine Companies and one Ladder Company, responding out of six stations. In order to maintain the current ISO rating of 1, Fire Department response must be in five minutes 90% of the time for the first due engine and nine minutes 90% of the time for the second due engine and first due ladder.

Chief Tanner discussed fire apparatus replacement. Currently, the Fire Department needs to replace one first out pumper that has 7,075 engine hours, which equates to an odometer reading of 283,000 miles. Two staff vehicles also need to be replaced. Chief Tanner also shared that the Fire Department's Self-Contained Breathing Apparatus (SCBAs) must be replaced, according to Occupational Safety and Health Administration (OSHA) and National Fire Protection Association (NFPA) guidelines and Department of Transportation (DOT) mandates. The Fire Department has submitted a grant for the purchase of replacement SCBAs, which has a 10% match. If the department does not receive the grant, the SCBAs will need to be purchased outright using a lease program starting in the FY 26-27 budget to stay in compliance with the regulations.

Chief Tanner spoke of Fire Department facilities and growth. Due to annexation and continued growth, Chief Tanner discussed the need to add an additional Engine Company on the west side of the City at Fire Station #4, an additional Battalion Chief, and an additional Fire Station on the southeast side of the City.



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Adding this additional company would improve response times and resource distribution in a high demand zone and support community growth by aligning resources with expanding infrastructure and population. It also helps to maintain coverage and response times in line with guidelines to growth boundaries. The Fire Department has applied for a SAFER grant which would offset the cost of the personnel for three years. If the grant is received, the grant will pay 75% of the cost of the personnel for the first two years of employment and then 35% for the third year. After the third year, the City would absorb the total cost of the personnel.

Chief Tanner discussed the current Building Department status. Over the last three years, the Building Department has experienced an overall increase of over 40% in inspections. If this increase continues, the City will need to hire additional inspectors to keep up with the increase. Chief Tanner said the Building Department will be reinstating re-inspection fees and proposed increasing building permit fees to be more in line with other municipalities. There was a discussion regarding the inspection process and fees among Council and staff.

After much discussion of fees among Council and staff, Councilman McCall requested that Council be provided a list of all fees proposed in the FY 2026-27 budget.

Public Works Department

Mr. Adam Swindler, Public Works Director, said Beautification and Facilities (including the animal shelter), Equipment Maintenance, and Sanitation are the three divisions of the Public Works Department. Mr. Swindler then provided an overview of future Public Works needs. Current Beautification and Facilities Division needs include four additional employees; various capital equipment such as forklift, motor grader, backhoe, skid-steer, tree trucks, brush chipper, fleet pickups, and fleet mowers; and new housing/space for offices, equipment storage, and sign shop operations. Mr. Swindler also discussed necessary facility repairs for the animal shelter. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the operations of the animal shelter.

Current Equipment Maintenance Division needs include three additional employees; an updated/new facility and amenities to meet current and future service/repair needs; capital equipment; and other items such as a Fleet Maintenance Management Software. Mr. Swindler shared that the Fleet Management Software will begin implementation in February and is scheduled to go live in March 2026.

Mr. Swindler spoke on the Sanitation Division next. Sanitation collects approximately 14,450 residential units per week or approximately 2890 units per day. For every 500 units added, an additional route/truck is needed. Mr. Swindler discussed the transfer fee increases over the last 8 years. The recycling fee has risen significantly and now stands at \$186.85 per ton, while only about 25% of the City's residents participate in the program. In fiscal year 2025, 296 tons of co-mingled/single-stream recyclable material were collected, at an approximate cost of \$50,320. He emphasized that the City needs to make a decision regarding recycling due to low participation coupled with rising costs. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding yard waste collection and recycling.

Mr. Swindler presented needs for the Sanitation Division to include new facilities and additional trucks. Mr. Swindler discussed aging offices and buildings at the Public Works Department site. New facilities needed include offices, meeting and training rooms, lockers and bathrooms and showers. Depending on annexation numbers, it is forecast that two residential rear loader trucks will be necessary at a cost of approximately \$700,000. If the City continues the recycling program, an additional commercial front loader truck will be necessary at a cost of approximately \$600,000. Prices for sanitation trucks are expected to increase. Currently, a commercial front loader is \$400,000, a basic residential rear loader is



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\$275,000, an upgraded residential rear loader is \$325,000, a grapple loader is \$200,000 and a lift gate truck for roll cart delivery is \$65,000. Mr. Swindler reviewed some issues sanitation faces to include landlord evictions. In South Carolina State Code, a landlord is able to set the evicted tenant’s belongings on the curb. The City then must collect the items, but only after forty-eight hours has passed. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding best practices for handling landlord evictions.

ADJOURN

Without objection, the January 8, 2026 Retreat Work Session of City Council was adjourned at 4:58p.m.

FRIDAY, JANUARY 9, 2026

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Barnes called the Friday, January 9, 2026 Work Retreat Session of Florence City Council to order at 8:59a.m.

INVOCATION

Mayor Barnes gave the invocation for the meeting. The pledge of allegiance to the American Flag followed the invocation.

Water & Sewer Impact Fee Proposal

Mr. Davis explained that impact fees are a tool the City can use to help fund growth and development. These fees would apply to water and sewer services, as well as general government services such as Fire, Police, Public Works, and Parks and Recreation. As development continues, impact fees would be proposed to help ensure that existing residents are not required to cover, through their taxes, the costs associated with new development. For example, a large new subdivision could create demand for additional equipment, such as a fire truck or sanitation truck, to adequately serve the area and meet service requirements. The City of Florence was also compared with other municipalities throughout the state to evaluate how its proposed impact fees align with those currently in place elsewhere.

Mr. Daryll Parker and Ms. Tara Hollis of Willdan Financial Services joined the meeting via teleconference to present the Water and Sewer Impact Fee Proposal to Council. The following chart illustrates the Water and Sewer Impact Fee Proposal:

City of Florence, SC	Water	Wastewater	Combined
Proposed Fee per ERU	\$ 4,260	4,450	8,710

Mr. Parker shared that the figures presented represent maximum allowable amounts, and that Council has may adopt fees at any level below those amounts, provided they remain legally defensible.

Councilman Braddock asked whether the fees would apply to all new development. Mr. Parker confirmed that they would be imposed on any new residential or commercial development connecting to the City’s utility system. Councilman Braddock expressed concerns that implementing impact fees could discourage affordable and workforce housing opportunities from coming to the area.



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Councilman McKay spoke against imposing impact fees, saying that the City is currently functioning well and managing growth effectively without them.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson expressed support for impact fees, noting that they could help offset the costs of road maintenance, particularly when roads are damaged by heavy equipment associated with new development and construction activity.

Councilman McCall asked for clarification on whether there would be separate impact fees for water and sewer versus general services. Mr. Parker responded that these fees are typically structured as separate categories.

There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the Water and Sewer Impact Fee Proposal.

The following chart illustrates the General Services Impact Fee Proposal:

Land Use	Fire and Rescue Facilities	Police Facilities	Parks and Rec Facilities	Sanitation Facilities	Total
Residential (per Dwelling Unit)					
Single Family	\$ 1,615.82	\$ 571.03	\$ 3,130	\$ 332.28	\$ 5,649.13
Multifamily	1,051.34	371.55	2,037	216.20	3,676.09
Nonresidential (per 1,000 sq. ft)					
Commercial	\$ 646.66	\$ 228.52	\$ -	\$ 492.84	\$ 1,368.02
Industrial	436.53	154.26	\$ -	492.84	1,083.63

Ms. Hollis shared that Parks and Recreation will have the most variation in rates due to only being applied to residential customers.

Councilman McCall inquired on the projected annual revenue amount from impact fees. Mr. Hemingway said it has not been determined at this time.

There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the General Services Impact Fee Proposal. Mayor Barnes suggested that Council reconvene at a later time to review impact fees and find a solution that will benefit the City. Mr. Davis said if Council wishes to move forward with impact fees, it will require to go before Planning Commission for review before being adopted by Council.

Water & Sewer Master Planning & Economic Development

Mr. Michael Hemingway, Utility Planning and Economic Development Director, highlighted potential federal funding opportunities. Current funding requests include \$5M Continuing Resolution (CR) for the City's for the Surface Water Treatment Plant Expansion from Senator Lindsey Graham and \$2.75M CR



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for the Surface Water Treatment Plant Expansion through the Water Resources Development Act 2024 from Congressman Russell Frye, 7th District South Carolina Representative.

Mr. Hemingway then highlighted key achievements of the City to include:

- City Council adopted Master Plans – Water, Sewer and Stormwater
- SCRIA – SCIPP Water Line Distribution projects all completed and operational
- Began SCRIA – SCIPP GE GWTP Project
- Installation of the new 24 inch water transmission main to serve Florence Global Technology Park along Energy Drive
- Increased consistency of monthly meter reading for water billing
- Bid and awarded \$52M SWTP Project
- Obtained better than market projection \$138M Water & Sewer Bond Issuance for water and sewer projects

Mr. Hemingway also highlighted 2026 Goals for Water & Sewer Master Planning & Economic Development:

- Closeout SCRIA-SCIPP Projects Grant - \$9,908M
- GE GWTP online
- Achieve SCRIA \$1.5M grant for sewer project – Spring 2026
- Complete all installation and operational gravity sewer, force main, and pump station to serve Florence Global Technology Park
- SWTP capital maintenance and rehabilitation project begins
- SCDES approves SWTP increased production capacity from 10-15MG
- Start construction of the new IMG Florence East Industrial Park elevated water tank
- Start construction of the East Palmetto Phase I sewer corridor improvements
- Awarded and obtained in hand federally funded projects
- Continue to increase meter staff efficiency with quality customer service

Mr. Hemingway and Mr. Whittington provided a copy of the Water & Sewer Quarterly Update to Council and reviewed the \$138M current bond water and sewer projects.

Councilman McCall requested that Council receive pictures of SCADA installation on the city's water plants.

Parks, Recreation, and Sports Tourism

Mrs. Victoria Nash, Director of Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism and Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager, highlighted the City of Florence Parks, Recreation and Sport Tourism Master Plan which was conducted by Coastal Carolina University's Sport Management Graduate Department in spring 2025. Eight recommendations were included in the Master Plan to include aquatic programs, focus on maintaining trails and trail safety, increase community events, adapted programming for people with disabilities, implement homeless and safety protocols, fitness and wellness programs, community engagement/marketing and increase participation fees.

Mrs. Nash spoke on the importance of adding wayfinding signage to the city's trails and said this initiative could be funded with the 30% early purchase funding. Investing in quality wayfinding signage will not only improve the safety of the trail system but also enhance the overall enjoyment. She also



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highlighted interpretive signage at the city's parks. Interpretive signs serve as outdoor graphic displays that enhance awareness, appreciation and understanding of the environment.

Mrs. Nash also highlighted the importance of additional park site amenities. Upgrading these amenities, such as upgrading the existing park benches, not only add practical value but also promote a sense of community and encourage outdoor activities. There is a need to replace picnic shelters at Lucas Park and Jebaily Park. Upgrading these shelters allows for the installation of durable materials and low-maintenance features, reducing long-term costs and ensuring the shelters remain in good condition for an extended period of time.

Mrs. Nash then shared that Lester Park no longer meets the needs of the community due to low usage, aging infrastructure and the high cost of ongoing maintenance relative to its benefit. It was proposed to better invest resources currently allocated to Lester Park in parks and facilities that serve a larger portion of the community to align with current recreation demands.

There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding potential initiatives to replace with Lester Park.

Mrs. Nash said improving Jebaily Park by adding a disc golf course and enhancing passive play areas would activate the space while preserving its natural character.

Mrs. Nash spoke of the Blue Trail System and Florence Trail System. She highlighted the current accessibility challenges at the boat launches, specifically at Cashua Drive, Jeffries Creek and Naturally Outdoors. Current access points seem to be inadequate and there is a need for better infrastructure to facilitate easier and safer boat launches.

Mrs. Nash shared that part of the 30% fund request includes a bus for Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism to support city programs. This request supports the replacement of an aging 2002 bus and meets growing transportation needs. The cost for the bus is approximately \$150,000.

Mrs. Nash provided an update on the Carolina Bank Field Upgrades. These upgrades are required by the Coastal Plain League Facility Standards and Compliance Procedures. The league will cover the cost of the pitch clocks. There is a need for the jumbotron at the stadium, approximately \$190,000. The league will also implement a sonic deck, which will be paid for by the league.

Mrs. Nash spoke on department projects. These projects will be covered under the hospitality bond and include a football complex, tennis projects, expansion of the Pearl Moore Basketball Center and the Levy Park expansion project. Mrs. Nash shared that Timrod Park and McLeod Park Master Plans have been considered to maintain and upgrade these parks. Once funding becomes available, these Master Plans will be implemented.

Mrs. Nash closed by highlighting the repairs needed at the Freedom Florence Complex. The complex is experiencing significant age-related infrastructure issues that impact safety, functionality and code compliance. An estimated \$1 million investment is needed to modernize the facility, address deferred maintenance and bring the complex back into full compliance to ensure long-term usability and safety.

[Break: 10:57am – 11:16am]



Utilities Department

Mr. Josh Whittington, Utilities Director, spoke on the workforce of the Utilities Department. The City is in a strong position with licensed operators in Water Production and Wastewater Treatment. Utilities Department is comprised of employees with technical expertise and specialized skills. Mr. Whittington said entry level positions are easy to fill but mid-level skill positions such as Equipment Operators and Team Leaders are harder to fill. The Utilities Department will continue to implement policies to incentivize training and employee development to address these challenges.

Mr. Whittington highlighted the effects of rising costs on the Utilities Department to include electricity, chemicals, landfill fees, pipe fittings and supplies, and contracting utility work beyond the city staff's capability.

Mr. Whittington reviewed the equipment needs of the Utilities Department which include an excavator with truck and flatbed (approximately \$500,000), vacuum tanker (approximately \$75,000) and a sewer vac truck (approximately \$575,000).

Mr. Whittington said project needs for the Utilities Department include:

- Otis Way water
- Kings Gate sewer force main
- Irby Street water
- McCurdy Road water
- Spoil pile removal from Public Works
- Asbestos program
- Stadium Road water

Mr. Whittington highlighted the benefits of remote monitoring and SCADA by providing a demonstration of the city's SCADA system. SCADA has the ability to remotely monitor, access and control offsite locations. It assists in monitoring lift stations for failure and/overflow, groundwater production and potential problems, receive alarms to operators for quick response, and monitor tank levels and water system pressures. City staff is able to log into VT SCADA to view water plants, tanks, system pressure and lift stations.

Pro tem Jebaily referenced the water and sewer projects included in the bond approved by Council and asked if it will fully resolve the City's water quality issues. Mr. Whittington said that the proposed projects will resolve about half of the issues, with the remaining issues being addressed in the second phase of the bond. Mr. Hemingway the remaining bond is for \$50 million and shared that the current bond will occur over a 3-year period. He explained that the City cannot bond money for years and not use it.

There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding water quality issues and the plans to address water quality issues. Council requested a way to show the community the progress of the distribution system. Pro tem Jebaily requested a timeline regarding water quality plan/repairs and updates.

Mr. Whittington then reviewed Distribution Operations. In FY 2025–26, funding was allocated to establish a dedicated leak repair team to promptly address and repair water line breaks. Looking ahead, he emphasized that as treatment plants are rehabilitated, corresponding investments must also be made in the distribution system. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding hiring a public relations firm for water operations



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[Break: 12:06pm – 12:25pm]

Mr. Whittington then highlighted the City's wastewater treatment operations. He noted that the wastewater treatment plant is in need of updates and repairs, which have been incorporated into the Wastewater Treatment Bond projects. Additional investments are also needed in SCADA monitoring for lift stations, along with maintenance contracts for generators and medium-voltage equipment.

Mr. Whittington also addressed Collections and Stormwater Operations. He explained that the Collections System is aging, and some necessary repairs require costly contractor agreements. The Council previously approved the Sewer Master Plan, which includes a total of 16 projects valued at approximately \$225 million and scheduled through 2045. Mr. Whittington stated that the Sewer Master Plan will serve as a roadmap for investing in and improving the Collections System, as well as for managing and eliminating sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs).

There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding SSOs.

Mr. Whittington further noted that the City's stormwater system is also aging and complex, and it was not designed to accommodate the intensity of storms that have become more common in recent years. He noted that the City, Florence County and South Carolina Department of Transportation (DOT) all own a part of the stormwater system. He referenced the Stormwater Master Plan and related Capital Improvement Projects, which include 51 projects totaling approximately \$47.6 million.

Mr. Whittington highlighted the Maintenance/Compliance Division. He said this is a small division but handles a big variety of important work. The Maintenance Division primarily focuses on maintenance of Utilities plants and equipment, other city facilities such as parks, recreational areas, offices), and banners and Christmas lights. He spoke of the new NFPA 70B requirements and said going forward, adequate staff needs to be ensured to handle the electrical and maintenance needs of the City.

Mr. Whittington said the Compliance Division maintains regulatory compliance and main focus is on safety. He acknowledged the addition of a new safety position, and this person will move safety programs forward and push safety to a new level in Utilities.

Community Services

Mr. Dudley gave an overview of the projects in progress to include rehabilitation, weatherization, demolition, new home construction and the East Pine Development. Mr. Dudley also provided an overview of Building Florence Together, the city's nonprofit organization, the Pine Street Master Plan and the City Center Building.

Growth and Development

Mr. Jerry Dudley, Planning Director, spoke on the methods of annexation. South Carolina has three methods of annexation: 100% method in which 100 percent of residents in a defined area petition for annexation; 75% method in which 75 percent of residents in a defined area petition for annexation; or 25% method in which 25 percent of residents in a defined area petition for annexation, a public referendum must be held, and a majority vote will determine if the properties are annexed. Mr. Dudley also reviewed the annual cost comparison between city residents and county residents. The annual cost for city residents is \$3,821.71, compared to \$4,641.99 for county residents. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding annexations and the benefits for residents and businesses inside the city limits to include Police, Fire, Sanitation, Utilities, Public Work, and Administrative Services.



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Mr. Dudley spoke on future considerations for city growth and development. Important concepts to consider with annexation, growth and development is the direction of residential growth; the direction of commercial growth; and impacts related to the extension of water and sewer infrastructure, stormwater, road maintenance, street lighting, sanitation services, fire services, police services, codes enforcement and zoning. There are common municipal strategies to assist with the cost for growth, such as impact fees and special purpose tax districts.

Mr. Dudley spoke on upcoming projects that will need to be addressed in the Unified Development Ordinance. These include an update to the sign ordinance, tiny homes/cottage development, townhomes, a tree ordinance and neighborhood stores. Projects underway include the five-year update to the 2020 Comprehensive Plan, a Neighborhood Revitalization Plan, and a Housing Study, which is in the final phases.

Mr. Dudley and Mr. Moore provided an overview of the Housing Needs Assessment. Key points from the assessment include 7.5% growth in households from 2010-2020, majority of the growth occurred in West Florence (14.4%) and South Florence (8.7%), the City has an aging population, housing affordability, housing availability and a rental shortage. Council will receive the full report of the Housing Needs Assessment by Patrick Bowen with Bowen National Research at the January 12th Council meeting. Mr. Dudley and Mr. Moore also provided a housing and rental outlook. The estimated population by 2030 is 47,000 residents. The recent median sales price for a home in Florence is \$240,000, up from \$159,500 in 2019. The average household income is \$65,046. The current cost of a new build residential home is \$146 per square foot and current thirty-year fixed mortgage rate is 6.20%.

Mr. Moore shared that the City has been tracking residential development since 2018. Projects in the residential development include under review, approved, under construction and complete projects. Inside the city limits, there has been 678 multifamily homes, 799 townhomes, 4,158 single family homes, and 22 tiny homes, totaling 5,657 housing units within the city limits. Outside the city limits, there has been 336 multifamily homes, 354 townhomes, 2,352 single family homes, totaling 3,042 units outside the city limits and an overall total of 8,699 housing units.

Projects Update

Mr. Moore provided an update on stormwater projects in relation to the \$7 million stormwater bond. Projects completed include St. Anthony/College Park, Sandhurst West, Tarleton Estates. Surveying and engineering has begun for Malden Drive. Cannon Street is on hold, portions of work will be tied in with Pennsylvania Street and the city is working with Florence County on Woodland Drive. Rebecca Street has been on hold for 2 years due to easement related issues. Pennsylvania Street is under construction. Engineering is set to begin spring 2026 for Dargan and Elm Streets and the Cheves Street (underpass) projects. Engineering is set to begin spring 2026 for Wisteria Drive. Cedar and McQueen Street is under construction. The North Church and Oakland Avenue project has gone through permitting and will be up for bid in January or February. The Stormwater Master Plan is complete and was adopted by Council on September 8, 2025.

Mr. Moore provided information regarding the Capital Projects Sales Tax III that was passed by referendum in November 2020. The City received \$40,000,000 from the County and a bond was issued in the summer of 2021. Approximately 170 total roadways and projects were included, and, to date, eighty roadways have been completed. Group 11, comprising twelve streets, and Group 13, comprising eleven streets will begin work the beginning of this year. There was a discussion among Council and staff



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regarding the Penny Sales Tax. Councilman McCall requested that this information be shared on social media to show the work that is currently being done.

Mr. Moore gave an overview of projects in progress, to include the Carolina Theater Renovation and 349 W. Evans Street. The Carolina Theater renovation is expected to be completed by early 2026. A \$100,000 grant was received for 349 W. Evans Street to upfit the two commercial spaces for a retail incubator and will be completed by May 2026.

Mr. Moore provided an update on the Rental Uniform Property. This property covers fourteen acres and is approximately 95,590 total square feet. City staff had discussions with the owner and a realtor regarding the City acquiring the property. Current status of the property is as follows: Phase I and Phase II ESA has been completed, all previous studies with environmental engineer Stantec have been reviewed, the non-responsible party voluntary cleanup contract from South Carolina Department of Environmental Services has been received and the Analysis of Brownfields Cleanup Analysis (ABCA) has been completed. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the Rental Uniform Property.

Mr. Moore highlighted the City's public-private partnerships for projects such as Urban Square, 175 N. Dargan Street, 127 W. Evans Street, Warley Street townhomes, 262 W. Cheves Street Multi-Use Development and The Sarah Townhomes. Council requested that city staff review and present funding options for increasing upfit grants.

[Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson left the meeting at 2:03pm.]

Artificial Intelligence

Currently, the City uses Artificial Intelligence (AI) in the City Manager's Office through the City's chatbot, Cypress. There was a discussion among Council and staff regarding the risks and benefits for AI in various departments such as Finance, Human Resources, Building Department and Planning, Research and Development Department.

OPIOID Funding – Community Action Plan

Mr. Davis highlighted the City of Florence Opioid Settlement Community Action Plan that was presented at the December Council meeting by the Steadman Group. Council will discuss how they would like to implement this plan moving forward.

Mayor Barnes thanked city staff for all of their hard work and dedication.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Barnes said Council will be entering into Executive Session for a personnel matter.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to enter into Executive Session and Councilman McCall seconded the motion. Council voted unanimously (6-0) to enter into Executive Session at 2:38pm.

Councilman McCall made a motion to resume open session and Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion. The motion carried. Council resumed open session at 2:52pm. Mayor Barnes said no action was taken while in Executive Session.



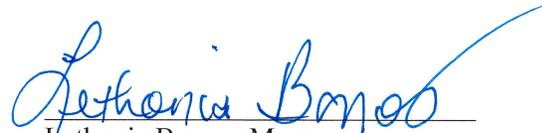
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ADJOURN

Without objection, the January 9, 2026 Retreat Work Session of City Council was adjourned at 2:52p.m.

Dated this 9th day of March 2026.


Casey C. Moore, Municipal Clerk


Lethonia Barnes, Mayor