



**REGULAR MEETING OF FLORENCE CITY COUNCIL
MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026 – 1:00 P.M.
CITY CENTER – COUNCIL CHAMBERS
324 WEST EVANS STREET
FLORENCE, SOUTH CAROLINA**

MEMBERS PRESENT

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

ALSO PRESENT

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

MEDIA PRESENT

Deirdre Weaver-Currin with the Post and Courier and Eric Cooper with WBTW News 13 were present for the meeting.

Notices of this regular meeting 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.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Barnes called the March 9, 2026 Regular meeting of Florence City Council to order at 1:01pm.

INVOCATION

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

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Councilman McKay made a motion to permanently add monthly updates from city staff or AECOM regarding the city's water, wastewater and stormwater systems to the agenda and Councilman Braddock seconded the motion.



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Council voted unanimously (7-0) to adopt the agenda for the March 9, 2026 Regular meeting. The meeting agenda was adopted.

Pro tem Jebaily shared that copies of the city's Water Quality Improvement Plan are available for anyone who would like a copy. The plan will also be shared on the city's website.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to adopt the minutes of the January 8-9, 2026 Work Session and Councilman Smith seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously (7-0) adopted.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to adopt the minutes of the February 9, 2026 Regular Meeting and Councilman Smith seconded the motion. The minutes were unanimously (7-0) adopted.

SERVICE RECOGNITIONS

Mr. Adam Swindler, Director of Public Works, recognized Almario Preacher for 25 years of service with the City of Florence.

Mr. Adam Swindler, Director of Public Works, recognized Isaiah Harley for 20 years of service with the City of Florence.

GRANT PRESENTATION

The Duke Energy Foundation Grant – Presented by Mindy Taylor, Director of Government and Community Relations, Duke Energy

Mrs. Mindy Taylor, Director of Government and Community Relations, presented the City of Florence with a \$10,000 grant from The Foundation. She explained that last year, The Duke Energy Foundation awarded the City \$5,000 and partnered on a tree giveaway event. Although the event was expected to last about three hours, most of the trees were distributed within the first hour, demonstrating strong community interest and making the effort a clear success. Because of that success, The Duke Energy Foundation committed to partner with the City again this year, doubling its support to \$10,000. The new grant will fund two tree giveaway events: one scheduled for late April and another in the fall.

APPEARANCES BEFORE COUNCIL

Robert McCready

Mr. Robert McCready appeared before Council to speak about removing fluoride from the city's drinking water. He distinguished between naturally occurring fluoride and the chemical additive used in water treatment. He cited research linking fluoride exposure to calcification of the pineal gland in adults and raised concerns about related health effects, including reduced melatonin production and earlier puberty in children. He stated the city could save about \$10,000 by eliminating fluoride and referenced pending state legislation (House Bill 4258) to ban it. He argued many municipalities have already rejected fluoridation, that most people filter their water anyway, and that fluoride in water is not at a sufficient level to prevent tooth decay. He suggested fluoride can instead be obtained through toothpaste.



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Councilman Braddock asked about potential links between fluoride and autism. Mr. McCready said there are links being studied, noting ongoing research by the NIH and reiterating concerns about pineal gland calcification and related health impacts.

Councilman McCall asked how Mr. McCready responds to CDC statements that fluoridation benefits low-income families who may lack access to regular dental care. He also emphasized concern about affordability for families. Mr. McCready said agencies like the CDC and ADA support fluoridation, while others such as the NIH and Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) do not want to keep fluoride in the water. He maintained that fluoride levels in water are ineffective for preventing tooth decay and therefore not worth the cost. Councilman McCall emphasized the importance of affordability, saying he would not support anything that increases costs for families.

Councilman Smith questioned how low-income residents without access to water filtration would be affected if fluoride were removed. Mr. McCready said such residents have limited options but could obtain fluoride through toothpaste. He reiterated that fluoride levels in water are not sufficient to significantly impact dental health..

Mayor Barnes thanked Mr. McCready and said the City will conduct further research on the issue..

ORDINANCES IN POSITION

Bill No. 2026-01 – Second Reading

An Ordinance to annex and zone RU the property located at 2916 West Palmetto Street, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 00100-01-031.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2026-01 on second reading and Councilman McKay seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2026-01 was adopted.

Bill No. 2026-02 – Second Reading

An Ordinance to amend the Planned Development District for New Ebenezer Baptist Church at 312 South Ravenel Street, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 90103-03-001.

Councilman Smith made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2026-02 on second reading and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2026-02 was adopted.

Bill No. 2026-03 – Second Reading

An Ordinance to amend the City of Florence *Unified Development Ordinance* regarding itinerant vendor sales, mobile services, and temporary use permits.

Councilman McKay made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2026-03 on second reading and Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2026-03 was adopted.



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Bill No. 2026-05 – Second Reading

An Ordinance authorizing the conveyance of property located at 804 Waverly Avenue, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 90061-11-015, to facilitate the construction of a home which will be marketed for sale at prices based on fair market value as part of the neighborhood redevelopment efforts within the City of Florence.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2026-05 on second reading and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2026-05 was adopted.

Bill No. 2026-06 – Second Reading

An Ordinance to amend the budget for Fiscal Year beginning July 1, 2025 and ending June 30, 2026.

Councilman McCall made a motion to adopt Bill No. 2026-06 on second reading and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Mayor Barnes inquired on how many readings there would be for the budget. Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager, clarified that this is an amendment to the budget for the 30% early purchases.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2026-06 was adopted.

INTRODUCTION OF ORDINANCES

Bill No. 2026-04 – First Reading

An Ordinance to amend the City of Florence *Unified Development Ordinance* regarding in-home childcare facilities.

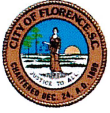
Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to pass Bill No. 2026-04 on first reading and Councilman McKay seconded the motion.

Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Planning, explained that the proposed ordinance would amend the City's code to align with the International Fire Code by limiting residential childcare facilities to five children instead of six, eliminating ongoing inconsistency with fire code requirements.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson asked whether the Department of Social Services (DSS) plans to update its guidelines. Mr. Dudley said DSS has not yet done so but may at the state level. Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson expressed concern that adopting the ordinance now could create challenges for providers allowed and reimbursed for six children under DSS but limited to five under fire code.

Pro tem Jebaily asked whether there was urgency to adopt the ordinance. Mr. Dudley said the City could continue operating under the current code, though staff must explain the discrepancy to applicants. He also confirmed that existing facilities permitted for six children would be grandfathered in, based on guidance from the State Fire Marshal, though state-level enforcement could not be guaranteed. Pro tem Jebaily added that the intent of the amendment is to align with state regulations and reduce confusion.

Councilman McCall expressed opposition, citing concerns about increased regulations, added costs for childcare providers, and economic strain. He supported tabling the item and said he would not support the amendment.



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Councilman Braddock noted confusion between City approval for six children and state enforcement limiting facilities to five. Mr. Dudley agreed this has been the City's understanding based on discussions with state officials. Councilman Braddock also raised concerns about regulatory costs and confusion, and cautioned against delaying action.

Councilman McKay asked whether a grandfathered facility serving six children could return to that number if enrollment drops. Mr. Dudley said the City would not regulate that once a permit is issued and, if adopted, oversight would fall more to DSS. He added that if state regulations change, the City could update its code accordingly. Councilman McKay also asked about mirroring state regulations, and Mr. Dudley said staff could revise the ordinance language to reference state standards instead of a fixed number.

Pro tem Jebaily asked whether Bill No. 2026-04 could be deferred for another month to allow staff time to revisit and potentially revise the language. Mayor Barnes then asked Mr. Ron Scott, City Attorney, whether a vote was required to defer the item. Mr. Scott confirmed that a vote would be needed and that any motion to defer should specify a timeframe.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson noted that she had earlier requested to table the matter, prompting Mayor Barnes to ask Mr. Scott to clarify the difference between tabling and deferring. Mr. Scott explained that tabling removes an item from the agenda until it is brought back by Council, often causing it to lapse if not revisited, while deferring places the item back on a future agenda at a specified time.

Councilman Braddock expressed concern that tabling the amendment would create additional confusion for those entering the childcare business and delay addressing inconsistencies with state standards.

Councilman McCall maintained that the amendment was an unnecessary regulation, noting it had already been deferred once. He supported tabling the item and stated he would not support it regardless of further consideration. Pro tem Jebaily emphasized that the regulation originates at the state level and that the City's intent is to align with those standards to avoid misleading applicants, not to impose new requirements. Mr. Scott added that tabling is typically reserved for more urgent situations and suggested deferral or other procedural options, such as voting the item down or advancing it with revisions, would be more appropriate.

Councilman McCall further noted that the amendment includes additional changes beyond the childcare capacity limit that had not been fully discussed.

Mayor Barnes asked whether a letter could be sent to the Department of Social Services requesting updates to its guidelines, and Mr. Dudley confirmed that it could.

Councilman Braddock then requested clarification on the other proposed changes, which Mr. Dudley provided.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to defer Bill No. 2026-04 until the Department of Social Services has taken action to update their regulations and Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion.

Council voted (6-1) in favor of the motion, with Councilman McCall voting against the motion. Bill No. 2026-04 was deferred.



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Bill No. 2026-07 – First Reading

An Ordinance to annex and zone NC-15 the property located at 2511 Ascot Drive, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 01221-01-191.

Councilman McKay made a motion to pass Bill No. 2026-07 on first reading and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Planning, said this property is located in Windsor Forest and is the site of a single family detached home. Planning Commission voted unanimously (8-0) to recommend both the annexation and the proposed zoning designation of Neighborhood Conservation 15 (NC-15).

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2026-07 was passed on first reading.

Bill No. 2026-08 – First Reading

An Ordinance to annex and zone NC-15 the property located at 2710 Trotter Road, identified as Florence County Tax Map Number 00984-01-007.

Councilman Braddock made a motion to pass Bill No. 2026-08 on first reading and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Planning, said this property is located in the Grove Park subdivision. There is a single-family detached home on this lot. The proposed zoning designation is Neighborhood Conservation 15 (NC-15), which was unanimously (8-0) recommended by Planning Commission.

Councilman Braddock asked whether the City was taking any steps to encourage an increase in annexations, expressed support for annexation efforts, and inquired whether the current activity reflects a typical trend. Mr. Dudley responded that this is a normal pattern, noting that while staff are occasionally invited by community members to discuss annexation, no such outreach has taken place in the past year, and the current requests reflect usual activity.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2026-08 was passed on first reading.

Bill No. 2026-09 – First Reading

An Ordinance to amend the City of Florence *Unified Development Ordinance* regarding window signage.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to pass Bill No. 2026-09 on first reading and Councilman McKay seconded the motion.

Mr. Jerry Dudley, Director of Planning, presented a proposed amendment to the City's sign code regarding window signage. He explained that window signage is currently an allowed use without a permit, and some businesses cover up to 100% of their windows. Because façade signage is typically limited to 25%, this can result in window signage exceeding what is otherwise permitted. The proposed amendment would change window signage from an allowed use to a permitted use and limit coverage to no more than 25% of the window in all commercial zoning districts.

Pro tem Jebaily stated that excessive window signage has become a significant issue, raising concerns about both safety, due to limited visibility into buildings, and the negative impact on community beautification efforts. He requested visual examples comparing current allowances with the proposed



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changes. He also asked for clarification, noting that if a business had 20 windows currently covered at 100%, the amendment would limit coverage to only 25%, or about five windows. Mr. Dudley confirmed. Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson expressed that window signage serves as an important advertising tool and suggested the limitation apply to 25% of all windows collectively, rather than each individual window. Mr. Dudley responded that staff would not oppose that approach.

Councilman Smith asked for clarification that the amendment applies only to signage and not window tint. Mr. Dudley confirmed that tinting would not be regulated under this amendment. Councilman Smith raised concerns about adding additional regulations on businesses and noted that window signage is an important form of advertising, particularly for small businesses.

Councilman Braddock acknowledged Pro tem Jebaily's concerns but emphasized the importance of maintaining visibility and ensuring customers can easily identify businesses. He stated he would like to better understand the potential impact on businesses before making a decision.

Mayor Barnes asked Interim Police Chief Stephen Starling to address safety concerns. Interim Chief Starling agreed that blocked visibility can pose safety risks for law enforcement when responding to calls, but noted that similar concerns would remain since window tinting is not addressed in the ordinance. Councilman McCall asked for clarification that the amendment applies to windows, including glass doors, and not to small informational signage such as business hours. Mr. Dudley confirmed that the ordinance targets larger advertising signage and would not apply to typical informational signs. Councilman McCall also noted that businesses could remove signage and still apply tint under the proposed rules, which Mr. Dudley confirmed.

Mr. Ron Scott, City Attorney, noted that a motion for first reading approval had already been made by Pro tem Jebaily and seconded by Councilman McKay.

Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager, clarified that the proposed amendment would apply to new businesses and not existing ones.

Mayor Barnes reiterated that while large window signage would be limited, tinting would still be allowed. Mr. Dudley confirmed that the amendment does not regulate tint.

Pro tem Jebaily asked that, if the ordinance is deferred, will staff also consider addressing window tinting to better resolve safety concerns. Interim Chief Starling advised that while it could be reviewed, it may introduce additional complexities and should be carefully considered.

Councilman Braddock made a motion to defer Bill No. 2026-09 until Council is provided with visual examples and additional information. Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Council voted (6-1) in favor of the motion, with Councilman McCall voting against the motion. Bill No. 2026-09 was deferred.

Bill No. 2026-10 – First Reading

An Ordinance to create the Florence City-County Convention and Visitors Commission, to provide for the operation of the Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau to include provisions for the Commission's organization and funding, and other matters related thereto.

Mayor Barnes said this item may be discussed in Executive Session. Without objection, this item will be discussed in Executive Session.



INTRODUCTION OF RESOLUTIONS

Resolution No. 2026-10

A Resolution of Recognition for the United '74 class for their contributions to the community.

Councilman McCall made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2026-10 and Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion.

Mayor Barnes and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson presented the Resolution to the United '74 Class. United '74 Class thanked Council for the recognition.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2026-10 was passed.

Resolution No. 2026-11

A Resolution of Recognition for Justin Purvis for his outstanding community service and contributions to the community.

Councilman Braddock made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2026-11 and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Mayor Barnes and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson presented the Resolution to Justin Purvis. Mr. Purvis thanked Council for the recognition.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2026-11 was passed.

Resolution No. 2026-12

A Resolution of Recognition for the Florence Christian School Girls Basketball Team for winning the state championship.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2026-12 and Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion.

Mayor Barnes and Councilman Braddock presented the Resolution to the Florence Christian School Girls Basketball Team.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2026-12 was passed.

Resolution No. 2026-13

A Resolution of Recognition honoring the Mayor's Women's Ambassadors for their service and contributions to the community.

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2026-13 and Councilman Smith seconded the motion.

Mayor Barnes and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson presented the Resolution to the Mayor's Women's Ambassadors. Mrs. Jean Leatherman, Co-Chair of the Mayor's Women's Ambassadors, thanked Council for the recognition.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2026-13 was passed.



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Resolution No. 2026-14

A Resolution and Conditional Grant and Development Agreement to provide an incentive for the development of new housing within Historic West Florence and Waverly Avenue as part of the ongoing Neighborhood Redevelopment Project.

Mayor Barnes said this item may be discussed in Executive Session. Without objection, this item will be discussed in Executive Session.

REPORT TO COUNCIL

Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Mayor Barnes said this item may be discussed in Executive Session. Without objection, this item will be discussed in Executive Session.

Parks and Beautification Commission

Mrs. Victoria Nash, Director of Parks, Recreation and Sports Tourism, introduced Mr. Walter Sallenger and Mr. Darryl Mitchell to Council to present the Parks and Beautification Commission Annual Plan.

Mr. Sallenger informed Council that Mr. Mitchell has been named the new Chairman of the Parks and Beautification Commission. Mr. Mitchell thanked Council for the opportunity to serve and said he is committed to enhancing city parks and ensuring community safety.

Mr. Sallenger highlighted the Commission's accomplishments over the past five years, including improvements across multiple facilities and the recent rail trail extension at the soccer complex. He expressed appreciation to Council and staff for their support and shared several recommendations from the one-year plan, such as improved wayfinding at trails, park enhancements, facility repairs, and expanded programming. He also noted ongoing goals outlined in the Commission's five-year plan.

Councilman McCall thanked Mr. Sallenger for his service and referenced community interest in expanded aquatics programs. He asked how the City might address this need. Mr. Sallenger responded that aquatics projects are costly and present staffing challenges, such as hiring lifeguards, though some communities partner with school districts. He noted that while aquatics has been discussed for some time, it would require significant funding.

Glenn Bodenheimer, Finance Director

Mr. Glenn Bodenheimer, Finance Director, provided an update on opioid funding and the Opioid Community Action Plan. He outlined a proposal to create an Opioid Response Commission, with an ordinance to be presented next month. The five-member commission, appointed by the Finance, Audit and Budget Committee, would review funding applications annually and recommend allocations based on alignment with the City's action plan, with final approval by Council.

Mr. Jon Weiss, Chief Executive Officer, House of Hope of the Pee Dee, appeared before Council to share an overview of the organization's mission, facilities, and services. He noted they house 118-140 individuals nightly, serve over 300 meals daily, and have helped many transition to work or school.



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Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson asked about current capacity. Mr. Weiss said they are currently 95% full each night. Mr. Weiss reported facilities are about 95% full, with limited vacancies and several pending applications.

Councilman Braddock asked Mr. Weiss to share how the opioid funding would be used. Mr. Weiss said funding would support staffing, training, and expanding facility capacity, including adding 18–24 beds at the Courtney McGinnis Graham Community Shelter.

Pro tem Jebaily and Mr. Weiss expressed appreciation to Councilman Braddock for his service supporting the organization.

CITY MANAGER'S REPORT

Mr. Scotty Davis, City Manager, addressed concerns about odors near David McLeod Boulevard and Woody Jones, noting that staff has been actively working in the area. He explained that multiple large sewer lines (21-inch and 24-inch) currently feed into smaller 18-inch lines, creating bottlenecks and contributing to sanitary sewer overflows (SSOs). The long-term solution is part of a \$50 million infrastructure project, funded through \$25 million in bonds and \$25 million in grants, which includes installing a 30-inch pipe. The first phase is expected to be completed by late 2028. In the short term, the City has allocated \$1 million to repair and upsize several manholes, particularly in areas experiencing overflows. Some manholes are difficult to access due to their location in swampy areas. These improvements are intended to provide temporary relief by increasing capacity and reducing the frequency and severity of SSOs, with construction expected to begin soon and take approximately three months.

Pro tem Jebaily thanked staff for the update and asked for clarification on short- and long-term solutions. Mr. Davis explained that the highlighted “problem areas” are locations where SSOs have occurred and that short-term fixes will focus on improving manholes, while the long-term fix involves increasing pipe capacity. He also noted that all wastewater must flow through the City to the treatment facility, as a proposed second plant in Timmonsville was not approved. He asked to be kept informed about a nearby development with unusually high water usage, which Mr. Davis said may be due to a leak identified through smart meters.

Councilman McKay expressed frustration that the issue has persisted for months and questioned how it was not identified sooner. Mr. Davis acknowledged the concern, explaining that overflows can be intermittent and difficult to pinpoint, but said improved asset management and the use of smart monitoring tools will help staff better track and address issues moving forward.

Councilman McCall asked about the timeline for short-term fixes and whether they would resolve the odor. Mr. Davis said the short-term work should take about three months and will help reduce odors, but the long-term project is the permanent solution.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson, noting she lives near the area, shared that she has received numerous complaints and confirmed that the short-term fixes are expected to minimize the odor. Mr. Davis added that bids for the work were due in late March.

Councilman Braddock asked about using lime to control odors in the interim. Mr. Davis said lime has been used before but can be washed away during overflows; however, he agreed it could be applied more regularly to help mitigate the smell.



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Councilman McKay also raised concerns about water discoloration and system losses. Mr. Davis explained that smart meters have already helped identify leaks and continuous flow issues affecting hundreds of customers. He noted that SCADA systems will assist in monitoring water quality, including iron levels that can cause discoloration. Of the City's \$138 million bond, \$30 million is allocated for water quality improvements, and Council will receive monthly updates.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson asked about smart monitoring devices. Mr. Josh Whittington, Director of Utilities, explained that "smart covers," which cost about \$7,000 each, are used to monitor sewer levels and are currently deployed as mobile units to maximize effectiveness, with plans for broader use in the future.

Mayor Barnes emphasized that the primary issue is aging infrastructure, not water quality, noting the City maintains over 700 miles of pipes. She said disruptions in older lines can cause temporary discoloration and stressed that while improvements are underway, progress will take time.

Mr. Michael Hemingway, Director of Utility Planning and Economic Development, added that infrastructure upgrades are complex and costly, with pipe replacements ranging from \$1–2 million per mile depending on conditions and regulatory requirements.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson agreed with Mayor Barnes, noting the current Council inherited these challenges but remains committed to resolving them.

Mayor Barnes further stated that major industry investments in Florence reflect confidence in the City's water quality and reiterated the need for patience as improvements continue.

Councilman McKay supported providing monthly updates to keep the public informed and emphasized the importance of maintaining progress and transparency.

Pro tem Jebaily noted that the City's Water Quality Improvement Plan will be discussed further during the Business Development Committee report.

Interim Police Chief Stephen Starling informed Council that the Florence Police Department has been officially recognized for its recertification and accreditation. As a result, the department has been reaccredited by the state of South Carolina for another three years.

MAYORAL REPORT

Mayor Barnes asked Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson to highlight the Black History Parade held on February 28th.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson explained that the parade was originally scheduled for February 21st but was postponed due to rain. She reported that the rescheduled event was a success, with approximately 50 participants. She expressed appreciation to everyone involved and shared her hope that the parade will continue to grow and improve each year.



COMMITTEE REPORTS

Business Development Committee, Chaired by Pro tem Jebaily

Pro tem Jebaily reported that the committee received an update from AECOM regarding the city's utility system communications. He explained how receiving information is important from the community regarding water quality issues. The committee also received the city's Water Quality Improvement Plan. Pro tem Jebaily acknowledged copies of the plan were available and encouraged everyone to take a copy. He explained that approximately half of the city's water is produced through groundwater and the discoloration is a result of high iron content. The other half of the city's water is produced through surface water and there are no discoloration issues that come from surface water. The city's system is comprised of 33 wells and 14 groundwater plants. He also highlighted the SCADA system that is used to track and monitor the city's plants. Pro tem Jebaily said he is pleased that Council will be receiving monthly updates regarding the city's utility systems and acknowledged that Council has already adopted a number of master plans to include: Water Distribution Master Plan, Sewer Collection System Master Plan and a Stormwater Master Plan. The committee also received updates on Project Urban Square and ongoing city projects, as well as a report from Don Strickland, Executive Director of Pee Dee Regional Transport Authority (PDRTA).

Councilman McKay said he requested digital copies of the presentations from the meeting since he had to attend virtually and that he could share with the public and has yet to receive them. Mr. Michael Hemingway, Director of Utility Planning and Economic Development, said that the presentations were sent out to the committee via email after the meeting and would confirm what date they were sent out. Pro tem Jebaily asked if a link could be shared that could be shared with the public. Mr. Hemingway said the presentations haven't been completed online yet. They were sent to all of Council after the meeting and city staff is working with AECOM to finalize and make some corrections before releasing to the public.

Councilman Braddock requested a timeline of all the ordinances, resolutions, approval of budgets, studies, et cetera of the last five years that Council has passed regarding the city's utility system. He expressed the lack of communication to the community regarding action Council has taken to address the city's utility system. Mr. Hemingway acknowledged city staff is in the process of pulling this information together. Councilman Braddock said everyone should be on the same page when sharing information to the community to show where things were, where they are now and where they're going.

Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson concurred with Councilman Braddock and said everyone saying the same message would be helpful because these things do take a lot of planning.

Pro tem Jebaily referenced the Stormwater Plan and noted that \$7 million was raised from the initial \$0.50 stormwater increase and the City received \$14 million from state grants, totaling \$21 million. This is the action of things from several years ago and said this is the work of Council and staff actively engaging and making sure things happen. He commended city staff for their hard work and dedication.

Community Development Committee, Chaired by Mayor Barnes

Mayor Barnes said Council and staff is willing to come out to community meetings to answer questions and provide updates regarding the city. She spoke of the growth of the City and said working together is vital.

Councilman Smith spoke on a initiative regarding a special needs occupancy sticker. This sticker will help first responders respond better to residents who have an issue with sensitivity, cognitive and



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developmental disabilities. It would be a voluntary program where you place a sticker on your door visible for a first responder to see, or on your car, so if there is an emergency, they would be informed and know how they can help that resident. He said this would help first responders respond to those with disabilities in a different and effective manner. Councilman Smith acknowledged support for the initiative from Interim Chief Starling, the Community Development Committee and all of Council as well. He reiterated that this program would help first responders better serve the community and protect them in a special way.

Mayor Barnes spoke on the ongoing Neighborhood Revitalization public meetings and spoke of the success and large turnouts for the meetings.

Appointments to Building Florence Together

Mayor Barnes made a motion to reappoint Devon Long to the Building Florence Together Board of Directors and Councilman McCall seconded the motion. Devon Long was appointed to the Building Florence Together Board of Directors for a term to begin immediately and expire in November 2026.

Mayor Barnes made a motion to reappoint Terrence Thomas to the Building Florence Together Board of Directors and Councilman McCall seconded the motion. Terrence Thomas was appointed to the Building Florence Together Board of Directors for a term to begin immediately and expire in November 2026.

Finance, Audit and Budget Committee, Chaired by Councilman McCall

Councilman McCall reported that the committee discussed structuring the opioid funding committee.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Mayor Barnes said Council will be entering into Executive Session for a discussion and receipt of legal advice regarding proposed contractual arrangements involving the creation of an intergovernmental public body as referenced in Bill No. 2026-10, for a discussion regarding a development project as referenced in Resolution No. 2026-14, for a discussion regarding appointments to city Boards and Commissions, for a discussion regarding an Economic Development project located within the Downtown Central, for a discussion and receipt of legal advice regarding proposed contractual arrangements involving Florence School District One and for a personnel matter regarding the reappointment of judges.

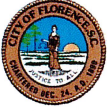
Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson made a motion to enter into Executive Session and Councilman McCall seconded the motion. Council voted unanimously (7-0) to enter into Executive Session at 3:23pm.

Councilman McCall made a motion to resume open session and Councilman Braddock seconded the motion. The motion carried. Council resumed open session at 4:33 pm and took action on the following items:

Bill No. 2026-10 – First Reading

An Ordinance to create the Florence City-County Convention and Visitors Commission, to provide for the operation of the Florence Convention and Visitors Bureau to include provisions for the Commission's organization and funding, and other matters related thereto.

Councilman McCall made a motion to pass Bill No. 2026-10 on first reading and Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion.



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Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Bill No. 2026-10 was passed on first reading.

Resolution No. 2026-14

A Resolution and Conditional Grant and Development Agreement to provide an incentive for the development of new housing within Historic West Florence and Waverly Avenue as part of the ongoing Neighborhood Redevelopment Project.

Councilman McCall made a motion to pass Resolution No. 2026-14 and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson seconded the motion.

Council voted unanimously (7-0) in favor of the motion. Resolution No. 2026-14 was passed.

Appointments to Boards and Commissions

Mr. Davis presented the packet of appointments to Boards and Commissions to Council.

Design Review Board

Councilman McCall deferred his nomination to the Board.

Construction and Maintenance Board of Adjustments and Appeals

Mayor Barnes deferred remaining nominations to the Board.

Resilience and Sustainability Advisory Committee

Councilman Smith deferred his nomination to the Board.

Public Safety Citizen's Review Board

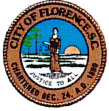
Councilman Braddock made a motion to appoint John Rosado to the Public Safety Citizen's Review Board and the motion carried unanimously. John Rosado was appointed to the Public Safety Citizen's Review Board for a term to begin immediately and expire on June 30, 2027.

Florence City-County Agricultural Commission

Pro tem Jebaily made a motion to appoint Melissa Lee to the Florence City-County Agricultural Commission and the motion carried unanimously. Melissa Lee was appointed to the Florence City-County Agricultural Commission for a term to begin immediately and expire on June 30, 2028.

Contractual Agreement with Florence School District One

Councilman Smith made a motion that City Council grant the City Manager the authority to initiate a negotiation with Florence School District One concerning an intergovernmental agreement for the provision of specific recreational facilities with the understanding that such an agreement will require the subsequent final approval of City Council and Pro tem Jebaily seconded the motion.



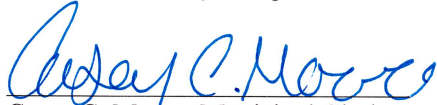
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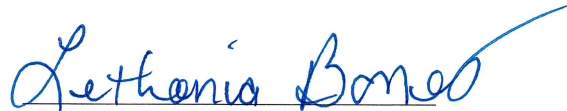
Council voted (5-2) with Mayor Barnes, Pro tem Jebaily, Councilman McCall, Councilman Braddock and Councilman Smith voting in favor of the motion and Councilwoman NeSmith-Jackson and Councilman McKay voting against the motion. The motion was passed.

ADJOURN

Without objection, the March 9, 2026 Regular meeting of City Council was adjourned at 4:40pm.

Dated this 13th day of April 2026.


Casey C. Moore, Municipal Clerk


Lethonia Barnes, Mayor