

MARLBORO COUNTY COUNCIL
MARLBORO COUNTY ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PARTNERSHIP BUILDING
COUNCIL CHAMBERS

TUESDAY, JUNE 8, 2021

6:00 PM

CHAIRMAN

JASON STEEN

VICE CHAIR
ADMINISTRATOR
CLERK TO COUNCIL
COUNTY ATTORNEY

CORRIE PLATO
RON MUNNERLYN
PATRICIA BUNDY
ANDREW MCLEOD *

COUNCIL:

JASON STEEN
CHARLES P. MIDGLEY, JR. *
KENNETH STROMAN
STEVE BLACKMON, AND

DR. DAMIEN JOHNSON
CORRIE H. PLATO *
VERD ODOM
ANTHONY WOODS

- Absent

Others Present: Mr. Doug Carabo, Public Services Director; Ms. Doris Sumpter, Administrative Services Director; Mr. Wes Park, Finance Director; and Ms. Jackie Hough, of the Herald-Advocate.

A copy of the agenda was emailed to Ms. Jacqueline Hough and Mr. Dan McNiel of the Herald Advocate and posted on the front door of the William P. Wallace, Sr. Administration Building and on the county's website (www.marlborocounty.sc.gov).

INVOCATION – Mr. Anthony Woods

APPROVAL OF AGENDA ITEMS

Motion made by Mr. Anthony Woods, seconded by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, to approve the agenda as presented. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

PUBLIC HEARING

ORDINANCE # 810 – AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH AND COLLECT A LOCAL HOSPITALITY TAX IN MARLBORO COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, recognized Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, to make comments on this Ordinance.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated this was the public hearing to impose a hospitality tax of 2% for all prepared foods and drinks in the unincorporated areas of the county. He stated the revenues from this tax would be used to improve services and facilities for tourists and citizens. He stated once approved, the Ordinance would be shared with the SC Department of Revenue so that merchants in the county could be notified. He stated the SC Department of Revenue would provide merchants guidance as to how to collect the tax on behalf of the county.

Mr. Wes Park, Marlboro County Finance Director, stated the tax would become effective October 1, 2021 and the tax is estimated to generate approximately \$100,000 in revenue for the county.

Chairman Steen asked if there were any other questions or comments. There were none.

ORDINANCE # 811 – AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT THE ANNUAL BUDGET AND TO MAKE APPROPRIATIONS FOR MARLBORO COUNTY FOR THE FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2021 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2022

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, stated that the Public Hearing on this Ordinance has been rescheduled for June 21, 2021 at 5:30 pm.

ORDINANCE # 812 – AN ORDINANCE TO APPROVE THE CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN FOR MARLBORO COUNTY FOR THE PERIOD OF FY 2022-2026

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, stated that the Public Hearing on this Ordinance has been rescheduled for June 21, 2021 at 5:30 pm.

ORDINANCE # 814 – AN ORDINANCE RATIFYING AND AUTHORIZING THE ALLOCATION OF CERTAIN REVENUES DERIVED FROM ONE OR MORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS LOCATED IN MARLBORO COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA (“COUNTY”) IN THE JOINT COUNTY INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS PARK BETWEEN DARLINGTON AND MARLBORO COUNTIES; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, recognized Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, to make comments on this Ordinance.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated this was a companion Ordinance to the recent tax incentive agreement which was adopted for the Domtar properties. He stated this Ordinance explains how the taxes from the FILOT should be allocated between the two facilities and will keep the allocation the

same as it has been in years past with the prior incentive agreement. He stated this Ordinance also provides the Marlboro County Treasurer instructions for allocation.

Chairman Steen asked if there were any other questions or comments. There were none.

The Public Hearing was closed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

MAY 11, 2021 – REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, asked if there were any comments on the minutes or suggested changes or additions. There were no recommended changes.

Motion made by Mr. Anthony Woods, seconded by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, to approve the regular council meeting minutes of May 11, 2021 as presented. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

OLD BUSINESS

FY 2021-22 OPERATING BUDGET UPDATE AND DISCUSSION

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, recognized Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, to make comments on this item.

Mr. Munnerlyn provided an update on the budget since the last Council meeting. He stated staff has worked aggressively to adjust departments' budgets to actual numbers with no "fluff" and agrees to use fund balance or amendments in the event unplanned expenses occur during the year. He stated staff has worked to fine tune revenue estimates since a couple of additional months have passed, and revenues are now a little clearer. He also stated staff is seeking Council's input on budget requests that have been made.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated at the end of the last meeting, the bottom line indicated the need of \$230,000 to balance the budget. He stated this could be a combination of expense reductions or new revenue. He also stated the amount needed to balance the budget would increase if budget requests were included. He stated the amount of estimated expenses for the FY 2021-22 budget discussed at the May Council meeting were \$12,653,000 and revenues were estimated at \$11,973,000 which would require approximately \$680,000 from fund reserves.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated there were additional costs included in the FY 2021-22 budget since last reading. He stated the 2% cost of living increase which would begin in February, 2022, would cost about \$60,000 and ransomware for the county was estimated at \$25,000. He mentioned the Carolina Pipeline and the need for the ransomware. He stated with these additional costs, the amount needed from reserve funds would be \$765,000.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated staff was able to find some cost reduction and revenue increases since the last meeting. He stated staff had worked to obtain a savings of \$50,000 in the workers compensation premium with the same company that we have used the past several years; a savings of \$50,000 with the equipment lease (vehicles for various departments); additional LOST revenue in the amount of \$50,000; and miscellaneous revenues totaling \$170,000. He stated with these savings and additional revenues only \$445,000 would be needed from the fund reserves.

Mr. Munnerlyn reminded members of Council that fund reserves were used over the last three years to balance the budget as follows: FY 2018-19 \$320,150; FY 2019-20 \$423,620; and FY 2020-21 \$445,000.

Mr. Munnerlyn mentioned the Sheriff's Department and Detention Center's Overtime Rate. He stated staff in those departments currently work on a "fluctuating" overtime basis which means the more they work, the less they make per hour. He stated staff has looked over the last 12 months and on average, the Sheriff's office employees have worked 10.2 hours of overtime per pay period and their hourly rate of pay for overtime is .5 x the regular rate. He stated the Detention Center employees have worked 25 hours of overtime per pay period and their hourly rate of pay for overtime is .4 x the regular rate. He stated much of the overtime for the Detention Center employees is due to the number of vacant positions in the department. Mr. Munnerlyn stated salaries were recently increased for these positions and staff has discussed with the Sheriff the hopes of being able to find folks to fill these vacant positions which he felt would be a cost savings for overtime needed.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated the estimated additional cost for overtime in the current situation is estimated at \$170,000 a year. He stated if Council decided to pay the overtime rate with reserve funds for the increase of \$170,000, the amount needed from the fund reserves would be \$615,000 which far exceeded the target of \$400,000 which is where staff suggests we remain. Mr. Munnerlyn stated the alternative, which is what staff would recommend, would be to increase the revenue by that amount which would result in a tax increase of 3 tax mils. He stated it may be possible to reduce it to 2.5 mils and staff could look at that a little closer. He stated he needed council's input as to how to move forward on this issue.

Mr. Anthony Woods asked how much a 3 mil tax increase would increase property taxes for a residential home valued at \$100,000. Mr. Wes Park, Marlboro County Finance Director, stated the increase would be somewhere around \$12 on a legal residence valued at \$100,000. Mr. Munnerlyn stated the increase would be higher on business properties.

Dr. Damien Johnson asked what the steps would be for Council to approve the 3 mil tax increase. Mr. Munnerlyn stated that Council would approve the budget and authorize staff to set the millage rate later in the year (around August). He stated once the budget is approved, staff will work to determine what the actual millage would be and recommend the millage rates for the approved budget which Council would be requested to adopt by Resolution.

Mr. Woods asked if the need for overtime would be eliminated if the six vacancies at the Detention Center were filled. Sheriff Charles Lemon stated it would not eliminate the need for overtime, but it would certainly be reduced. Mr. Woods asked what the starting salary for Detention Center employees were and Sheriff Lemon responded around \$26,200.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman asked if staff and Council would need to consider another tax mil increase should the estimate of \$170,000 for the upcoming year not be sufficient.

Mr. Woods stated he did not want to raise taxes this year and have to do it again next year. He stated he felt the citizens would likely want council to handle it all at one time. He suggested if a larger increase was needed, he felt it should be done this year.

Chairman Steen stated staff had looked at the overtime used over the last 12 months and felt comfortable with the amount of \$170,000 being enough to take care of the cost of the overtime for the upcoming year.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated if the vacant positions are filled there will be a cost savings and he hoped the savings would take care of any funds needed for additional overtime. He stated the Sheriff can never have any idea about how many murders he may have to deal with or how many missing children cases he may have. He stated it is very difficult to know how much overtime would be needed for his department at any given time. He stated he felt filling the vacant positions would take care of the need for any additional funds for overtime.

Dr. Johnson asked where the funds would come from to pay the employees for those vacant positions. Mr. Munnerlyn confirmed that all vacant positions were already budgeted. Dr. Johnson stated something needed to be done about the overtime situation.

Mr. Steve Blackmon agreed the Sheriff and Detention Center employees needed help. He stated everyone understands how he feels about raising taxes. He suggested Council follow staff's suggestion and if another increase is needed next year, Council could consider that then. He stated taxes are never reduced and suggested Council raise the tax milage for the amount needed right now.

Mr. Verd Odom asked where the millage increase limit came in. Mr. Wes Park stated it was complicated but since staff is performing the reassessment, staff can review the records for three years back and base the millage increase on those numbers. He stated the County has had some increase due to inflation based on the CPI (Consumer Price Index) which is 1.23%. He stated if the county did not have the reassessment, it would be limited to increasing millage a little more than 1 mil. He stated since the county can do a three year look back this year, the millage rate could be raised up to 4 to 4.5 mils.

Chairman Steen stated he feels that the overtime for the Sheriff's Department and the Detention Center is important but so is a tax mil increase. He stated Council needs to think about this prior

to the June 21st meeting. He stated the Sheriff needs to keep a close eye on the overtime for both departments. He stated these departments are public safety departments and Council wants to make sure they have the manpower when needed. He stated Council did not like putting a burden like this upon residents. He stated Council should think about it over the next couple of weeks to see what can be done.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated it was important to know that the overtime issues were the result of an agreement the County has with employees. He stated it was a legal document and to change it would require actions by the Court.

Mr. Stroman stated the State did not handle overtime this way. Mr. Munnerlyn stated the County is complying with a Court Order and nothing being done was illegal. He stated the Court Order has been reviewed by the labor law attorney and it is legal.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated he understands that Council will meet with the Sheriff between now and June 21st to see the plan he has in place and the impact that filling those vacancies may have. He stated the meeting could be held before the Council meeting on the 21st. He asked if this suited everyone.

Mr. Blackmon stated he wanted to be fair to the citizens since members of Council are obligated to them. He stated he felt Council needed to do what needed to be done and go from there.

Dr. Johnson agreed. He stated we have citizens that pay taxes that do not feel they are getting any benefits. He stated he did not want to create more problems for the citizens.

Mr. Blackmon stated Council needs to let the citizens know that Council is doing everything we can to keep taxes down. He stated members of Council work hard to do the best we can with the money we have and if we need to do more next year, we can review it at that time. He stated if the Sheriff's Department and Detention Center could get by with a 2.5 mil increase, then he felt that is what Council should do.

Dr. Johnson mentioned comp time and Mr. Munnerlyn stated comp time was not good. He stated he felt that employees needed to be paid and he felt the impact of hiring folks for the vacant positions would create a savings. He stated the County had not raised millage rates in the last three years and sometimes you just need to do what is right.

Chairman Steen asked if there were any other questions or comments. There were none.

ORDINANCE # 810 – AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH AND COLLECT A LOCAL HOSPITALITY TAX IN MARLBORO COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA – THIRD READING

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, stated the public hearing was just held on this Ordinance. He stated if third reading is approved the tax would become effective October 1st and it would not require a vote from the citizens.

Chairman Steen asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Motion made by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, seconded by Dr. Damien Johnson, to approve third reading of Ordinance # 810 – an Ordinance to Establish and Collect a Local Hospitality Tax in Marlboro County. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

ORDINANCE # 814 – AN ORDINANCE RATIFYING AND AUTHORIZING THE ALLOCATION OF CERTAIN REVENUES DERIVED FROM ONE OR MORE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT PROJECTS LOCATED IN MARLBORO COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA (“COUNTY”) IN THE JOINT COUNTY INDUSTRIAL AND BUSINESS PARK BETWEEN DARLINGTON AND MARLBORO COUNTIES; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO – THIRD READING

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, stated the public hearing was just held on this Ordinance and asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Motion made by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, seconded by Mr. Steve Blackmon, to approve third reading of Ordinance # 814 – an Ordinance Ratifying and Authorizing the Allocation of Certain Revenues Derived from one or more Economic Development Projects Located in Marlboro County, South Carolina (“County”) in the Joint County Industrial and Business Park Between Darlington and Marlboro Counties; and Other Matters Related Thereto. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

ORDINANCE # 815 – AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE MARLBORO COUNTY LIBRARY BOARD – THIRD READING

ORDINANCE # 816 – AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE MARLBORO COUNTY HISTORIC PRESERVATION COMMISSION – THIRD READING

ORDINANCE #817 – AN ORDINANCE ESTABLISHING THE MARLBORO COUNTY PLANNING COMMISSION – THIRD READING

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, stated the first and second reading votes on these three Ordinance were handled at one time since all the Ordinances were being revised to eliminate the residency requirement and to be in line with the other County boards and commissions.

Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, Marlboro County Administrator, stated Councilman Kenneth Stroman had approached staff about a request to appoint someone to represent his district on a board that did not reside in his district. He stated staff has found that it is getting harder each year to try to find qualified folks to fill the seats on the boards and commissions. He recommended approval of third reading of the three Ordinances.

Chairman Steen asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

Motion made by Mr. Anthony Woods, seconded by Mr. Verd Odom, to approve third reading of (1) Ordinance # 815 – an Ordinance Establishing the Marlboro County Library Board; (2) Ordinance # 816 – an Ordinance Establishing the Marlboro County Historic Preservation Commission; and (3) Ordinance # 817 – an Ordinance Establishing the Marlboro County Planning Commission. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

DISCUSSION OF REQUIREMENTS FOR SOLAR FARM DEVELOPMENTS

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, recognized Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, to make comments on this item.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated over the last 10-12 years folks have been interested in organizing solar farms but about 95% of the folks interested take no action. He stated it generally works where folks find land for the farms, obtain options to get things rolling, and then sell the options to Duke or another power company. He stated there are some that seem to be serious, and staff has been working over the past six to eight months to have rules in place to protect the citizens that live around or near the farm site areas. He stated the County has general zoning, but the current zoning does not say a lot about solar farms. He stated staff could present to Council some proposed rules that will govern the solar farms. He stated if someone presents the idea of constructing a solar farm and has 100 acres to do so, a set of plans would need to be drawn and they would need to appear and present the written plans to the Planning Commission. He stated staff has found a sample Ordinance from another county which has specific requirements which include:

1. Panels would be required to be 50' from property line and 200' from the nearest residence;
2. Buffers and vegetation up to 4' tall, must require 100% of panel height, and such vegetation must be staggered;
3. Buffers of 50' would also be required if solar panels are located near lakes, streams, ponds and rivers to preserve the county's water quality and prevent any adverse storm water effects.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated these requirements would not be as stiff if the solar farm is near a non-residential area or business. Mr. Munnerlyn also stated the sample ordinance would require folks to remove the panels and everything from property should they cease to operate it as a solar farm or within six months of generating solar power.

Mr. Steve Blackmon asked if it would be up to the landowner or the solar farm company to remove everything if the business ceased. Mr. Doug Carabo, Marlboro County Public Services Director, stated he felt it would be up to the solar folks, but staff would confirm that information. Mr. Munnerlyn stated this was the best method to make sure it is done right. He stated staff has

discussed zoning before and it is difficult to tell folks what a property owner can or cannot do with their own land.

Mr. Munnerlyn suggested Council consider having first reading on an Ordinance of this type possibly at the June 21st called meeting. He stated this type of Ordinance is being adopted in other surrounding counties.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman asked if he understood it correctly. He asked if he has 100 acres and decided he wanted to build a solar farm, that he would be allowed to do it. Mr. Munnerlyn confirmed he could. He stated the County currently has no zoning restrictions to keep this from being done.

Mr. Stroman mentioned certain properties being restricted. Mr. Munnerlyn explained that those were Restrictive Covenants which are placed on properties by landowners which would be a private transaction.

Mr. Stroman asked if the County had any zoning. Mr. Munnerlyn stated the county has zoning but the zoning was very general and broad. He stated some of the county's Ordinances restrict junk yards and racetracks and things like that, but nothing is mentioned about solar farms.

Mr. Stroman stated he understood that when folks have land for sale, they can sell it to whomever, but citizens have rights too. He stated to have a solar farm placed in the middle of a residential neighborhood is just a little much. Mr. Munnerlyn stated it is different for this type of project to be considered in a municipal area. He stated staff has not had an issue like this come up, but the challenge is do we have the right to tell someone how they can use their land. He stated if staff can put restrictions and policies in place, at least some protection could be provided for residents in the area.

Mr. Steve Blackmon stated staff must have a happy median. He stated the buffer is good and the County would not want to scare off someone that would want to invest \$10,000,000 in our area.

Dr. Damien Johnson asked if there were economic benefits to companies for these type projects. Mr. Munnerlyn stated there were benefits. He stated the company would be required to pay taxes on property and equipment and those taxes would generate a decent amount. He stated Palmetto Brick, a member of the Partnership, has about 25% of their company running on solar energy.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated the sample ordinance presented is about all Council can do legally without changing zoning.

Mr. Verd Odom stated that some solar farms would generate a lot of money.

Mr. Stroman stated that no one has explained solar farms to our citizens and folks do not seem to care that folks may experience health issues from these type facilities.

Chairman Steen stated he had seen solar farms all over the area and education about these type farms are necessary. He stated the buffer would help.

Mr. Blackmon stated there were places where we would not want these type facilities and Council needed to do what it could to fix that issue.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated no one has applied for a building permit to act on constructing a solar facility on the location being discussed. He stated if someone has 25 acres on Salem Road, by the time you require the company to construct buffers, the company may not have enough property to construct the facility as planned. He stated if Council was comfortable with going forward with the sample ordinance, staff could get that in order. He stated he could refer these concerns to the Planning Commission and request that the commission look at zoning and have the commission report back to us on their findings.

Chairman Steen stated he felt that was what Council wanted to do. He mentioned he thought a company was looking at possibly building one in McColl. He mentioned all the vacant property in McColl and stated we certainly did not want to deter folks from looking at properties in our County for future projects.

Mr. Blackmon stated staff needed to be sure to make the requirement that the property be cleaned at the end of the term or use. Mr. Munnerlyn stated the requirements to clean would follow the property owner. He stated he would make sure that the requirements are as clear as the law will allow.

APPROVAL OF RENEWAL OF DETENTION CENTER'S INMATE HEALTH CARE SERVICES CONTRACT WITH MEDIKO

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, recognized Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, to make comments on this item.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated the Detention Center's contract for inmate health care services is renewed annually. He stated staff has stated they are happy with the services being provided and has advised that the company does a good job. He stated staff is recommending that the contract be renewed for an additional one-year period.

Chairman Steen asked if there were any other questions or comments. There were none.

Motion made by Mr. Anthony Woods, seconded by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, to approve the renewal of Detention Center's Inmate Health Care Services Contract with MEDIKO for an additional one-year term. Vote in favor. Unanimous. Motion carried.

AMERICAN RECOVERY ACT UPDATE

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, recognized Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, to make comments on this item.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated the County would be receiving about \$5 million from the federal government. He stated half of those funds were deposited into the County's account today. He stated Marlboro, like other counties, still needs to understand how the funds can be used. He stated the rules are very general and do not clearly state how they can be used. He stated staff understands the funds cannot be used to place rocks on dirt roads, but staff understands that the County could utilize some of the funds for tourism. He stated the County has until 2024 to spend the funds. He stated the funds could be placed in an interest-bearing account until staff can figure out how the funds may be utilized. He stated \$5 million will generate a good bit of interest.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated he understood some of the funds could be used to modify facilities to have safe, no-contact type services, and mentioned the Carolina Bank building. He suggested a portion of the American Rescue plan funds could be used to purchase and renovate the Carolina Bank building and the funds which were approved and set aside for that purpose could be designated for recreation and placed back in the reserve funds. He stated staff is getting bids for the renovations and it appeared that the purchase and renovations would cost more than \$500,000 which was approved due to the inflation of material costs. He stated staff recommends Council consider a vote to use a portion of the American Rescue Plan funds for the purchase and renovations of the former Carolina Bank building. Then, put the money which was previously approved for that purpose back in fund reserves and earmark it for recreation. He stated this creates \$500,000 of seed money for recreation and takes a portion of the American Rescue funds for a use that we understand is allowable. Chairman Steen asked if those funds would carry over from year to year. Mr. Munnerlyn confirmed they could carry over from year to year.

Mr. Anthony Woods stated he agreed that Council should use a portion of the American Rescue funds for the purchase and renovations of the former Carolina Bank building and the monies which were approved for the Carolina Bank building be earmarked as recreation. He stated he felt a ceiling should be placed on the budget for the purchase and renovations of the Carolina Bank building. Mr. Munnerlyn stated staff feels that an amount of \$650,000 to \$700,000 would be enough for the purchase and renovations of the former Carolina Bank building. He stated he would suggest an amount not to exceed \$700,000.

Mr. Steve Blackmon stated he felt that was a win-win. He asked if staff had heard when the remaining \$2.5 million in American Rescue funds would be received. Mr. Munnerlyn stated he has not heard but knew it would be coming. He stated staff has not been given any notice as to when it would be received and had no idea that the \$2.5 million would be received today. He stated it just appeared.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman asked if staff could look at using a portion of the American Rescue funds to compensate essential workers, deputies, and those who have worked continuously during the pandemic. He stated they have not received any type of hazardous pay and he felt they should be

given something for all the hard work for the county. Mr. Munnerlyn stated Council could certainly consider that idea. He stated it was important to take care of essential workers as Mr. Stroman mentioned, but a significant part or at least his recommendation would be to use the funds for things that will pay back or provide something that will have a long-term impact or the condition of the county.

Chairman Steen asked if a vote needed to be taken.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated staff recommends that Council consider approving the use of American Rescue Plan funds for the purchase and renovation of the former Carolina Bank building in an amount not to exceed \$700,000 and that the fund balance funding previously approved for the project in the amount of \$500,000 be returned to the fund balance and restricted for future capital recreation projects.

Dr. Damien Johnson stated he understood that Council had voted on the purchase of the old Carolina Bank building but asked if it was a definite go. Mr. Munnerlyn stated it was binding in that a legal contract had been signed.

Chairman Steen stated he felt that taking the action recommended by staff would at least have funds earmarked for future capital recreation projects as there were none before. He stated this would be a start and felt it was a win-win for all members of Council.

Motion made by Mr. Kenneth Stroman, seconded by Mr. Steve Blackmon, to approve the use of American Rescue Plan funds for the purchase and renovation of the former Carolina Bank building in an amount not to exceed \$700,000. Also, the Fund Balance funding previously approved for this project in the amount of \$500,000 shall be returned to the Fund Balance and restricted for future capital Recreation projects. Vote in favor: Mr. Jason Steen, Mr. Kenneth Stroman, Mr. Verd Odom, Mr. Steve Blackmon, and Mr. Anthony Woods. Opposed: Dr. Damien Johnson. Vote: 5/1/0. Motion carried.

APPOINTMENTS TO BOARDS AND COMMISSIONS

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, stated that Councilwoman Corrie Plato was not present at the meeting but sent an email requesting that Council consider a recommendation for her district to the Library Board.

Library Board

Kathryn Jackson
Valerie Moody

Appointment by Ms. Corrie Plato
Appointment by Mr. Kenneth Stroman

Fire Board

Rob Stanton

Reappointment by Mr. Verd Odom

Chairman Steen asked if there were any other recommendations for appointments. There were none.

Motion made by Mr. Anthony Woods, seconded by Mr. Steve Blackmon, to approve the appointments for the Library Board and Fire Board as presented. Unanimous. Motion carried.

REPORTS

FINANCE REPORT – MR. WES PARK

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, recognized Mr. Wes Park, Finance Director, for his report.

Mr. Wes Park, Finance Director, stated the general fund revenues for the eleven months ending May 31, 2021 total \$11,015,039. He stated general fund expenditures through May 31st, 2021 total \$10,180,710 of a \$12,127,683 budget or 83.95 % of the budget year to date.

Chairman Steen asked if there were any questions or comments. There were none.

ADMINISTRATOR’S REPORT – MR. RON MUNNERLYN, COUNTY ADMINISTRATOR

Chairman Steen recognized Mr. Ron Munnerlyn, County Administrator, for the report.

EMPLOYEE SERVICE ANNIVERSARIES

The following employees were recognized with five or more years of service to Marlboro County through the month of May: Deborah Weldon (21 years); Johnny Fair (16 years); and Tonya Harmon (16 years).

UPCOMING EVENTS

1. **Lunch provided at the Community Kitchen** – Mr. Munnerlyn stated Marlboro County will provide lunch at the Community Kitchen tomorrow. He stated Sheriff Lemon and his department will be leading the group. The plates will be provided for take-out only.
2. **SCAC Annual Conference** – Mr. Munnerlyn stated the SC Association of Counties’ Annual Conference is scheduled for August 1st – 3rd, 2021 and Institute of Government classes will be available on July 30th – August 1st, 2021. He asked members of Council to please let Ms. Patricia Bundy know if they would like to attend the conference or take any classes offered by the Institute of Government so that appropriate reservations and arrangements may be made for them.

ADMINISTRATOR'S REPORT

Community Clean-Up Event – Mr. Munnerlyn stated the Community Clean-Up event went well with more than 380 folks participating and 3.25 tons of trash collected. He thanked everyone that participated.

Recreation Project RFP – Mr. Munnerlyn stated the MCEDP Image Committee is moving forward with the advertisement for proposals for a consultant to study our existing recreation programs and facilities. He stated the consultant will determine need and suggested changes based on other communities like ours. Most importantly, they will identify funding options and sources. He stated the committee was finalizing the deadlines for submission and the process for evaluation of bidders.

Update on Speculative Industrial Building RFP – Mr. Munnerlyn stated the proposals for the industrial speculative building are due on June 10, 2021. He stated the Infrastructure Committee of the MC Economic Development Partnership will evaluate the proposals along with staff and make a recommendation to County Council. He stated they were concerned about how the cost of materials and availability of labor will impact the project budget.

Recreation Sports

Tee-Ball – Mr. Munnerlyn stated the Recreation Department ended up with five teams of 4 to 6 years-old tee ball players. He stated they have one more week of games and then would have a pizza party and trophy ceremony.

Basketball – Mr. Munnerlyn stated staff was pleased to report that as of today the Recreation Department has registered enough players to have three teams for ages 8 to 12, three teams for ages 13 to 17, and six teams for the adult league (ages 18 and over). He stated additionally, 8 years and under will participate in an instructional league/camp.

Mr. Munnerlyn stated practice begins next week after which coaches will choose players in a draft. He stated the Recreation Department will accept new players up until practice next week and games will be played starting at 5:30 pm, Monday through Thursday and each age group will play (2) games per week.

Broadband Grants - Mr. Munnerlyn stated Sandhill has applied for the second round of CARES Act funding for broadband in the county. He shared a map that shows the areas they have applied for funding to expand into. He stated there is no guarantee that the grant will be awarded but we are hopeful many of the areas will be funded. He asked that folks please keep their fingers crossed.

Meeting with City, Towns, and School Board – Mr. Munnerlyn stated there has been some discussion with regards to a joint meeting of the different local governments in the County. He stated considering the County's ongoing strategic planning process which will be updated this fall, the City of Bennettsville's soon-to-happen strategic planning, and the group effort of the Image Committee of the Partnership regarding recreation and tourism, a meeting may be best to focus on fellowship and more general discussion. He stated if council is agreeable, staff will work to come up with dates and a location for Council to consider. He noted that this meeting will be a public meeting considering that a quorum of each board will be invited.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman asked if the County and its facilities were fully open for business. Mr. Munnerlyn stated the Emergency Ordinance which Council had in place has expired. He stated he has met with museum and recreation staff and think we should be back on our normal schedules and be open for business. He stated staff was concerned that folks will have large groups in facilities with no masks but there was really no way to enforce rules on this. Mr. Stroman suggested a statement be made to let folks know that we are fully open. Mr. Munnerlyn stated staff would request that this information be included in the paper so that folks will know and be aware.

RECOGNITION OF CITIZEN'S REQUEST BEFORE COUNCIL

Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, stated one citizen had signed up to address Council.

Ms. Pearlie Lawson – thanked Council for allowing her to speak on an item that was listed on the agenda. She stated she along with other residents residing on Collins Lane, Graves Lane, State Street Extension and Marshall Street have learned of a letter which was sent to a resident in the area from Pine Gate Renewables out of Charlotte, North Carolina. She stated the company is planning to develop a commercial solar energy farm in their neighborhood. She stated a group of residents are united and have drawn up a petition with signatures asking leaders and elected officials to stop the development of the solar farm in their area. She stated she understood there were benefits and that the landowner sold the land to make money; however, the solar farm would be in a residential area and residents are unsure of what harmful affects it may have. She stated children, middle-aged folks and senior citizens reside in the area and no one talked to any of them to consider their feelings. She asked why the solar farm could not be located on in the area near Highway 9 or some larger area of the county. She stated she had no issues with solar farms but simply did not want them in her neighborhood. She stated she would like for the company to know that the residents have signed the petition and do not want them to build their solar farm in their neighborhood and she asked that elected leaders accept the petition and stop the construction of the solar farm from happening.

Ms. Lawson stated that Ms. McQueen, a resident of the area, was present and wanted to address Council on the same issue.

Chairman Steen stated that Ms. McQueen did not sign up to speak. He stated to please note the rules were that folks who wish to address Council should sign up to speak before the Council meeting begins. He stated he would make an exception to allow her to speak since Ms. Lawson did not use the full three minutes allotted.

 McQueen - stated she did some research on solar farms and shared some printed information with members of Council which she had located on the topic that lists pros and cons regarding solar farms. Ms. McQueen shared some of her findings and stated that solar farms produce a large amount of radiation that can reduce the life expectancy of humans. She also stated that the radiation from solar farms destroy wildlife and causes death to birds.

Ms. McQueen stated the property values of properties around a solar farm would drop. She mentioned several other cons to having a solar farm in her neighborhood and asked Council for their help to stop the solar farm from coming to their area.

Chairman Steen thanked everyone for coming to the meeting tonight and for their comments.

RECOGNITION OF COUNCIL MEMBERS

Mr. Anthony Woods – mentioned the town’s loss of great folks recently to include former Mayor Joe Kinney. He stated the town would continue to move forward but the losses were certainly great.

Mr. Woods stated he felt the Council meeting was very productive and he looked forward to the June 21st called meeting.

Mr. Woods stated he learned a lot of information about solar farms during the meeting tonight. He stated he liked solar farms but hoped that staff could suggest a rural area for the folks to consider. He stated there was a lot of open land in the county. He asked staff to approach them and let them know about other lands in the county that may be available to deter them from building a solar farm in the Marshall Street area.

Mr. Woods mentioned the possible tax millage increase and stated no one liked taxes, including himself, but staff had to do what needed to be done to ensure that law enforcement is available to all when needed. He stated the Sheriff’s department needs manpower when things happen in the county, and he wanted to make sure they have what they need to serve the citizens when they need help.

Mr. Kenneth Stroman – thanked everyone for their condolences and kind words during the loss of his brother. He stated he appreciated everyone’s kind actions.

Mr. Stroman mentioned that Mia McLeod who is from Marlboro County, has announced that she will be running for Governor. He stated he was very proud of her.

Mr. Stroman thanked Ms. Pearlie Lawson for coming to the meeting tonight and thanked her and Ms. McQueen for educating everyone on solar farms. He stated he learned a lot from the information presented.

Mr. Stroman mentioned the possible tax millage increase. He stated he had no problem with being taxed if services are provided for those taxes. He stated he understood when there was not sufficient revenue that taxes should be raised. He stated if he needed Sheriff Lemon to respond to a call at his home, then he wanted him to show up.

Dr. Damien Johnson – stated he would continue to pray for all those that have lost loved ones.

Dr. Johnson stated every member of Council knew the job they have is not an easy one.

Dr. Johnson thanked Ms. Lawson and Ms. McQueen for the information shared on the solar farms. He stated solar farms are popular, but they needed to be constructed in the appropriate areas. He stated he did not know how the solar farm folks found the Marshall Street property. He stated if there was anything Council could do to prevent this from happening, they would do it.

Dr. Johnson recognized two citizens from his district which attended the meeting. He stated Rev. Stubbs was from the Lester area which was a forgotten part of the County. He stated no one checks on him and no mowing is ever done on his road. He stated they could not even walk down their street. He stated they were very active in their community and that Rev. Stubbs was called the Mayor of Lester. He stated they could use whatever support the County could give them from public works department.

Dr. Johnson mentioned the residents in Richardson Park that had raw sewage in their area recently. He stated it had been three weeks with no rain and members of Council had requested a meeting with City officials so that the two groups could get together to see what could be done to assist the residents regarding the flooding issues. He stated something needed to be done to help those residents.

Dr. Johnson stated he felt it was time for action to be taken. He asked what Council's purpose was if they only met every 30 days and did nothing to help the citizens between the meetings. He stated he could see why things are the way they are. He stated if this is the way we operate, he would understand why Marlboro County was the highest in the state in every negative category. He stated Marlboro County had to do better for their citizens. He stated the County was operating the same way it operated five years ago. He stated he prayed hard for the county and the council. He stated if Council does not change its procedures and the way it handles things, nothing will ever change.

Mr. Steve Blackmon – thanked the citizens for the comments on the solar farm in their residential neighborhood. He agreed with them that there was a time and place for everything. He stated the county needed zoning to take care of this to prevent this from happening.

Mr. Blackmon thanked staff for their work that they have done over the last few years. He stated a lot had been accomplished in the last few years and mentioned the Detention Center was built and the mega-dump that was fought from coming to the county. He stated the county had done more than some folks realize. He stated the county dealt with the trash situation and mentioned the new library that was built. He stated council has had many big obstacles in our way over the last few years but has always worked through them and did a tremendous job. He agreed that things were not perfect, and council needed to keep working hard. He stated he could not put council down. He stated council has done a pretty good job and has worked well together.

Mr. Blackmon stated he would do his best to keep taxes as low as possible and would work to get the most for the tax dollars as possible. He stated he was on council for the betterment of Marlboro County, not Blenheim or any one area. He stated if something is good for all, his vote would support it. He thanked staff and citizens.

Mr. Verd Odom – mentioned the Academy Road project and stated things were moving forward and hoped to have a date as to when work would begin. He stated he understood that monies had been appropriated for the project.

Mr. Odom mentioned that last Friday, Mr. Mark Keel, Director of SLED, who gave a 30-minute public news conference and stated that in the past year crime in SC had risen by 25%. He stated violent crimes and murders were up all over the state and the crime was not restricted to only the larger areas like Spartanburg but all over the state, including Marlboro, Dillon, and Chesterfield. He stated it was the best news conference he had seen to let the public know the situation we are in. He stated Director Keel made a comment that our local Sheriffs could not do it all and folks in the communities needed to get involved. He stated if citizens see something that does not look right in your own community, to please call 911 or the Sheriff's Department immediately so they could begin to head that way. He stated it was not a law enforcement problem but a community problem and everyone needed to get involved.

Mr. Odom stated former Chief Robert Stewart who was from Cheraw always said, "if it is not safe to go to church, if it is not safe to go to school, and if it is not safe to go to work, then you do not have a community". He agreed and stated community involvement was needed to support Sheriff Lemon and his deputies, as well as all the other law enforcement officers in the County.

Mr. Odom reiterated what Councilman Blackmon mentioned. He stated he was starting his second term on County Council, but his dad served on Council for 16 years and a lot has been accomplished over the years. He stated council had helped the Sheriff's Department and the way their vehicles are handled in making sure they have better vehicles to drive every time they go on the road and is a tremendous savings for the county. He stated Marlboro County fire departments have done well in investing their monies and the county has some of the best ISO ratings and best fire coverage as any county in the state. He stated the county created an Emergency Medical Services department due to complaints which were received from citizens

about response times and the EMS department does a great job in responding to calls. He stated everything has improved with the new EMS.

Mr. Odom stated the county was depressed as far as industrial taxes and was dependent on property taxes to provide services to citizens. He stated he hoped things would get better. He stated he could not go along with anyone talking negatively about council.

Dr. Johnson stated it was not his intention to put council down. He was not putting anyone down, but he was simply making an observation. He stated by no means was it his intention to put anyone down.

Mr. Odom stated in the last four years several rural fire stations were built.

Mr. Odom thanked Sheriff Lemon and his department for all they do for the county.

Sheriff Charles Lemon – thanked council, individually and collectively. He mentioned the press conference last Friday that he was a part of, which also included Sheriff Parnell from Dillon County and other local Sheriffs. He stated every county deals with the same issues and problems as Marlboro County. He stated he and his department would keep moving forward with the help of council and citizens in the county. He stated there was power in numbers. Sheriff Lemon thanked Council and staff for all they do for him and his department.

Mr. Jason Steen - thanked everyone for attending the meeting. He thanked staff for all their hard work in preparing the budget.

NON-AGENDA ITEMS


There were no non-agenda items.

ADJOURN

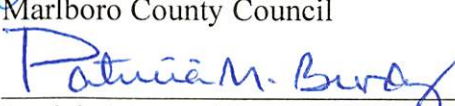
Mr. Jason Steen, Chairman, asked if there were any other comments or business. There being none, he adjourned the meeting at 7:46 pm.

(SEAL)

ATTEST:



Jason K. Steen, Chairman
Marlboro County Council



Patricia M. Bundy, Clerk
Marlboro County Council

Adopted: July 13, 2021