

Michael L. Beasley, Mayor

Miles Loadholt
Town Attorney

John D. Holston
Police Chief

Earthel Walker
Fire Chief

Inell W. Waring
Town Clerk



Council
Kelvin Isaac
M. Ann Pernell
Frederick B. (Fred) Orr
Allen Harrison
Frenchie Smalls
Stephen L. (Steve) Jowers, Sr.

**Town of Blackville
Regular Town Council Meeting
Blackville Community Center, 19464 Solomon Blatt Avenue
Blackville, South Carolina**

**Minutes
Monday, March 15, 2021**

The regular monthly meeting of the Town of Blackville's Town Council was called to order by Mayor Michael L. Beasley at 6:30 p.m. on Monday, March 15, 2021, at the Blackville Community Center.

Next Agenda Item: Invocation

Mayor Beasley asked Mayor Pro Tem Jowers to give the invocation.

Next Agenda Item: Roll Call

Mayor Michael L. Beasley asked for roll call to be given by Morgan Lightsey, Utility Clerk. Mayor Michael L. Beasley, present. Council Members Present: Kelvin Isaac, M. Ann Pernell, Allen Harrison, Frenchie Smalls, and Stephen L. (Steve) Jowers, Sr. Councilmember Frederick B. (Fred) Orr was absent. Mayor Beasley stated that we do have a quorum to conduct tonight's meeting.

In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws 1976-30-4-80 (e) as amended the following were notified of the meeting: The Barnwell People Sentinel, The Times and Democrat, and Town Attorney, Miles Loadholt.

Next Agenda Item: Approval of Agenda

Mayor Beasley asked for a motion to approve the agenda of March 15, 2021. There was a motion by Mayor Pro Tem Jowers with a second by Councilmember Isaac, to accept the agenda as presented.

For: All

Against: None

Next Agenda Item: Approval of Minutes

Mayor Beasley stated that council had received the minutes of February 16, 2021 in their packets. He asked for a motion to approve the minutes. There was a motion by Councilmember Isaac with a second by Councilmember Pernell to approve the minutes of the Tuesday, February 16, 2021 regular meeting.

For: All

Against: None

Next Agenda Item: Financials

Mayor Beasley stated that council had received the financial report in their packets. He stated if council had any questions concerning the financial statement, to please feel free to come by Town Hall and ask to speak with Ms. Inell or set up a meeting with him to cover any line items on our budget. The Mayor stated he has instructed the department heads to follow the line items as the budget year is soon approaching, so we can be within a balanced budget at the end of the fiscal year. He stated our budget looks good and we are on target to complete this year balanced.

Next Agenda Item: Public Comments

Mr. Carl Williams Jr. expressed his concerns about speeding and congestion at times on Falcon Street. Mayor Beasley stated for Mr. Williams to meet with Chief Holston to express to him the issues on Falcon Street so those issues can be corrected. The Mayor also stated he has spoken with our Code Enforcement Officer prior to this meeting, to handle other issues in that area as well. Mayor Beasley thanked Mr. Williams for expressing his concerns and that he would speak with Chief Holston. The Mayor asked Mr. Williams to speak with Chief Holston after the meeting to set up a meeting about his concerns.

Mayor Beasley wished Ms. Waring a Happy Birthday!

There were no other public comments.

Next Agenda Item: Business

a. Resolution No. 2021-02, April 2021 Fair Housing Month

Mayor Beasley read the resolution and asked for a motion to approve Resolution No. 2021-02 to designate April 2021 as Fair Housing Month. There was a motion by Councilmember Isaac with a second by Councilmember Jowers.

For: All

Against: None

b. Chief Earthel Walker, Blackville Fire Department-Update

Mayor Beasley gave this update. The Mayor stated Chief Walker would like to upgrade the air packs that are 26 years old by a process of obtaining grants. The Mayor stated Mr. Walker has researched and applied for grants to upgrade the air packs for the fire department. The Mayor stated Chief Walker also asked to obtain a generator for the Fire Department to be able to access the Bay doors during inclement weather incase of power outages. Mayor Beasley stated to council that they would try to seek these wishes in the upcoming budget and he feels that we will receive the grants for the air packs.

c. Chief John Holston, Blackville Police Department-Update

Chief Holston welcomed and thanked everyone in attendance. The Chief stated the Police Department is doing exceptionally well and is fully staffed with 5 full time certified officers, 1 non certified officer, Officer Iam John Alex Still, who is slated to go to the Criminal Justice Academy on April 4th. Chief Holston stated they are currently at a total of 12 officers, 6 full time class one officers, 1 full time class three officer, which is our Code Enforcement Officer, and 5 part time class one officers, who are all doing an outstanding job performing their duties. Chief Holston also stated the departments call for service has been down drastically this calendar year. He stated the nature of calls have not been at a high level of emergency compared to past years. The Chief stated despite the 2020-2021 year of COVID-19, there has not been an increase in calls of domestic violence, assaults, or any type of family related incidents. He stated the equipment for the Police Department is in good working order and he is thankful how the Officers maintain the equipment. He also stated the budget is on track where he normally finishes within 93-95% usage of the budget. He stated as we move into planning for fiscal year 2021-2022, he would be asking Mayor and Council for support in the goals he will be setting for the upcoming fiscal year. Chief Holston thanked the citizens in Blackville for making the Police Departments' job easier by having a good relationship with each other. Chief Holston stated that Sargent Gray in September of 2020 suggested that they have a recognition for officers within the Police Department. The Police Department has adopted a recognition of an Officer of the quarter. Officer Iam John Alex Still was recognized in the first quarter which ended in December 2020. The Officers are recognized for their overall job performance. Chief Holston recognized Officer Jones for Officer of the Quarter of January-March 2021. Chief Holston stated Officer Jones is a native of the Town of Blackville, a veteran of the United States Marine Corps, and a well-rounded officer. Chief Holston thanked Officer Jones and presented him with a certificate and a gift card.

Mayor Beasley congratulated Officer Jones and thanked him for his service. The Mayor asked Chief Holston to meet with the community on Falcon Street to develop a plan to address the concerns and if he needed resources to please reach out for help. The Mayor thanked Mr. Williams and Mr. Smalls for coming to the meeting to express their concerns on Falcon Street and to meet with Chief Holston. Mayor Beasley expressed his thankfulness to the Police Department and how we are grateful to have certified officers.

Mayor Pro Tem Jowers thanked Chief Holston for all that him and his department does. He stated he has the same issues of speeding on his street as well as Main Street, Country Club Road, and other roads in town. Mayor Pro Tem Jowers asked Chief Holston what was the Police Department doing to police certain areas in town. Chief Holston stated that there are normally only two officers during the day. Chief Holston also stated there are limited resources as far as man power but that he could start deploying officers in those areas where speeding is happening to work only traffic to reduce the number of incidents. Chief Holston stated that one of the questions he would ask of the community, is what time of day in which certain activity is occurring so he could deploy officers during that specific time. Mayor Pro Tem Jowers said he was mostly concerned about the speeding on the Main Street area and where businesses are, because of the people entering and exiting the businesses where people have to park on the side of the streets.

Councilmember Pernell expressed her concerns on Falcon Street as well.

Mayor Beasley stated to first identify the areas and create a plan to address those areas.

Mayor Pro Tem Jowers asked Chief Holston about placing a speed sign on Falcon Street. Chief Holston stated he did not think the signs cost but would get in touch with Highway Patrol about their policy in bringing us a radar sign to certain areas in town. Chief Holston also stated he would get with Mayor Pro Tem Jowers after the meeting to discuss signage being placed when events take place in town.

Mayor Beasley asked why hasn't Highway Patrol been in town lately. Chief Holston stated it is the same issue that is happening in law enforcement around the nation dealing with mass turnovers and a shortage of troopers. Chief Holston expressed how blessed our Police Department is to have a full staff because so many sister cities are struggling with staff members. Chief Holston stated he was in a meeting Saturday with Sheriff Griffith and the Community Relations Officer and Sheriff Griffith stated how even sated is at a shortage of officers.

Mayor Beasley stated again to identify the problems in our Town and start addressing them. He also stated we supported our Police Department, appreciated their work, and he would do whatever it takes to provide the department with what it needs to perform its duties. Mayor Beasley asked Chief Holston to contact various resources to help his department work traffic. Mayor Beasley stated Chief Holston's number one goal is to increase the officers and he knew we needed more man power.

d. Officer Joseph Tubbs, Code Enforcement-Update

Mayor Beasley gave the update for Officer Tubbs. He stated we currently have only one business that does not have a business license and they are working to get that license this week. He also stated there are 38 active structure violation cases open. Mayor Beasley stated we have sent the \$400.00 application fee to the Main Street Association and are waiting on the confirmation of our membership. Councilmember Isaac stated he is waiting for a return call from Ms. Jenny to obtain the status of the Main Street Association membership. Mayor Beasley commended Councilmember Isaac for his work with the Main Street Association and is looking forward to the resources the Association will provide. Mayor Beasley stated we are still working on the structures on Main Street. He stated the Shamrock is ready for demolition and the other three buildings next to it are in preparation to be removed as well. The Mayor stated once those buildings are removed, the Main Street Association will help the Town place new buildings in that area to create businesses and provide rental spaces for businesses as well. Mayor Beasley stated the priority on Officer Tubbs' list, is to focus on the areas of Falcon Street and Legion Road and the Mayor hopes to see a difference in this area soon. The Mayor stated he instructed our Code Enforcement to be strict on overgrown properties especially with summer approaching. The Mayor encouraged everyone to take care of their properties to help make our Town an inviting place. The Mayor stated the buildings being produced at Pine View is of great quality but there are still job openings that need to be filled. He stated the new industrial park building has been painted, is on the market, and the County is soon to announce more job openings within the next few weeks. The Mayor hopes Blackville will be one of those announced. The Mayor also stated he addressed the job openings to our educational system, such as the vocational school how important job training is and he stated Denmark Tech does a great job in providing job training. Mayor Beasley feels like our legislatures should address this issue as well. Mayor Beasley stated the Neighborhood Watch Program has been canceled until further notice due to COVID, but he will announce when they start meeting again.

e. Director Earthel Walker, Public Works Department-Update

Mayor Beasley stated Earthel Walker's goals are to hire experienced workers, obtain a higher start out pay, hire summer help to cut grass, replace maintenance vehicles, and to accomplish a consistent rotation plan of clean-up of our streets. Mayor Beasley stated we did hire a part time worker to pick up trash and areas in Town are starting to look cleaner. Mayor Beasley stated how not only the Town but our State suffers from littering and he read an article about the environmental challenges from littering so he encouraged everyone to take pride in keeping places clean! He encouraged organizations to adopt a highway or an area in Blackville to help make our Town a better place.

f. Blackville Buildings Condemnation and Demolition Committee-Update

Mayor Beasley stated the Blackville Condemnation and Demolition Committee met March 9th at 4:00 pm in the Courtroom and are currently addressing the building issues. The Mayor stated this committee signs off on condemning a building and then the Town can remove that property. The Mayor stated our attorneys have been contacted and once those codes are in place, the Town can remove buildings if they have been condemned. Mayor Beasley stated it is difficult to contact property owners because they are not local. The Mayor stated we are working hard to clean up our Town and placing some new structures in town to create a business district.

g. Discussions-Street Light Change, Savannah River Site's Lawsuit, Upcoming Budget, and Blackville Community Center

Mayor Beasley stated our current street lights are of amber color and create a shadow effect. He stated Dominion Energy has a program where they change out all street lights to LED lights that will give a daylight appearance. Dominion Energy wants the Town to sign a ten-year contract that gives a rebate to the Town of approximately \$1,100.00 per month that saves on the Town's electric bill of \$300.00 a month for 5 years which is approximately \$18,000.00. Then the next 5 years, hopefully residents energy bills decrease because of the LED lighting. The Mayor is reviewing the contract and thinks the LED lights will be more efficient for the Town.

The Mayor stated the Savannah River Site's \$575,000,000.000 Lawsuit is being debated upon if the funds will stay within the Barnwell, Aiken, Allendale, and Bamberg Counties. The Mayor stated our legislative delegates are Mr. Hosey and Mr. Hutto and they are meeting with the Mayor's tomorrow to discuss the funds. The Mayor stated he sent in the Town of Blackville's list for our use of funds. Some of those items listed are Broadband Service, Town infrastructure projects, beautification projects, equipment upgrades, Main Street rehab, and pay off the Town's debt. The Mayor stated the State is in control of the funds. He also stated the County has been working on this for three years and he is disappointed because the municipalities were not brought into the plan but the municipalities are now coming together to obtain funds.

Mayor Beasley stated the preliminary budget work is being done and as soon as our accountant gets the noncontrollable funds in a budget format, a budget meeting will take place. The Mayor stated the first reading will take place in May and the second reading in June.

Mayor Beasley asked Council for their suggestions concerning the Community Center. Council agreed to keeping the Community Center closed until the next Council Meeting in April.

Mayor Beasley stated he asked Ms. Waring to contact the Taste of Blackville Festival and Music and Arts Festival organizations to get their plan on having the festivals and both organizations have rescheduled for 2022. The Taste of Blackville Festival is rescheduled for Saturday, March 26, 2022. The Music and Arts organization is looking to plan an Octoberfest.

Next Agenda Item: Public Comments

Mr. Carl Williams Jr. stated people are not following social distancing and rules pertaining to COVID-19. Mayor Beasley stated since vaccines have been administered and the Governor has lifted some restrictions, he sees rules not being followed as well but he will still continue to wear his mask.

Ms. Coker asked for larger street signs to be considered when upgrading the signage throughout town. Mayor Beasley stated signage is of main priority at this time and wants input from the community on choosing the signage.

Ms. Littlejohn stated one of the entrance signs is in very bad shape and Mayor Beasley stated he made note to remove that sign.

Ms. Washington commended Officer Jones on his hard work with the Police Department and how well he serves the community. The Mayor thanked Ms. Washington for her kind words towards Officer Jones.

Ms. Alston asked how the blessing boxes were coming along and Mayor Beasley stated we were meeting with a gentleman who built things for the Town to move forward with building the boxes.

Ms. Alston also stated she had a contractor look at the library project to replace some of the flooring and handicap ramp but did not have a cost. Mayor Beasley stated he wanted to redo the entire outside area at the library and asked Ms. Alston to get the top price for doing so. Ms. Alston also got permission to ask for donations for the wood to be donated for the library project. Ms. Alston asked to have a Community Garden and the Mayor approved.

Mayor Beasley stated the park equipment has been ordered and once the equipment arrives, it will be assembled by whom we ordered the equipment from. He stated the area will be an area of achievement once it is completed.

Ms. Alston stated the Blackville Downtown Development Association has placed library book boxes in three different apartment complexes in town and the Mayor stated the Rotary Club wanted to purchase two library boxes for an area. Mayor Beasley stated the Rotary Club members will be visiting our library on March 25th to take a tour of our story walk and have lunch in our Town.

Mr. Terrance Washington stated the Music and Arts Festival will be rescheduled the third weekend in May of 2022, and they are trying to plan a smaller version of the festival in October. Mr. Washington also stated they are trying to plan for a small pop-up shop in May. Mayor Beasley thanked Mr. Washington for all they do for the community.

Ms. Ethel Washington asked Councilmember Pernell if she was still interested in decorating the downtown area for different holidays and Councilmember Pernell said she was and others were interested in helping as well.

Ms. Patricia Voyles stated she got in touch with SCDOT about the tree work on the major highways and they informed her, that the reason why the trees were having the appearance as seen, was due to a change in equipment and once the project is completed, the areas will look great. Chief Holston stated the State Department contracts companies to do the work and generally chooses the lowest bidder which sometimes results in low quality work. Mayor Beasley thanked Ms. Voyles for getting in contact with the SCDOT.

Mr. Washington stated the Music and Arts Festival would like to bring art into Blackville or possibly creating an art park. Mayor Beasley agreed with his idea.

Ms. Littlejohn stated the Blackville Downtown Development is providing memorial bricks for anyone who would like to purchase in memory of or in honor of someone and the forms will be

available soon. Councilmember Isaac stated that there is a letter prepared to advertise the bricks that can be placed on the Town's website.

Mayor Beasley encouraged everyone to please attend any meetings whether it be county or state level to be a voice for the Town of Blackville. Mayor Beasley thanked Mr. Williams for coming and standing up for Falcon Street. Mayor Beasley stated we may not always have answers but we would find resources to help with situations. Mr. Williams asked where he could obtain agendas for other meetings like state and county meetings and Mayor Beasley referred him to check with The People Sentinel and to check online resources where the agendas are normally posted.

There were no other public comments.

Next Agenda Item: Council Comments

Councilmember Harrison thanked everyone for coming and he thought the meeting went well.

Councilmember Isaac thanked everyone in attendance and he wished Ms. Inell a happy birthday. He stated Officer Jones is very deserving of his recognition and when he is walking, Councilmember Isaac stated Officer Jones will stop to ask if he needs anything. Councilmember Isaac stated there was speeding on Kennedy Road as well and would like the Officers to address it.

Mayor Pro Tem Jowers thanked everyone for coming and opening up during the comments to express feelings. He expressed his thankfulness to Chief Holston and the Police Department but was concerned about our citizens safety on Main Street.

Councilmember Pernel thanked everyone for coming and congratulated Officer Jones as well as the Police Department for all they do for our community. She also thanked Mr. Williams for expressing his concerns.

Councilmember Smalls thanked everyone for coming and that she has experienced issues on Falcon and Bellinger Street as well. She wished Ms. Waring a happy birthday.

Next Agenda Item: Mayor's Comments

Mayor asked for everyone to sing Happy Birthday to our Clerk, Ms. Inell.

Next Agenda Item: Adjourn

There being no further business to discuss, the Mayor asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. There was a motion from Councilmember Smalls with a second from Councilmember Isaac to adjourn the meeting.

For: All

Against: None

Respectfully submitted by:

Morgan Lightsey
Utility Clerk