



MINUTES

STRATEGIC PLANNING RETREAT MEETING

February 20, 2026

MEMBERS, OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Mr. John Elliott, District I
Mr. Matthew Durham, Chairman, District II
Mr. Don Mize, Vice Chairman, District III
Mr. Thomas James, Chairman Pro Tem, District IV
Mr. Glenn Hart, District V

Oconee County Council met on Friday, February 20, 2026 at 9:00 AM in the multi-purpose conference room, located at 552 Education Way, Westminster, SC with all Council Members, County Administrator Stewart Jones, Mr. Phil Shirley, County Attorney David Root, and Clerk to Council, Jennifer C. Adams present.

Press: Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting, date, time, place of meeting and agenda were posted on the bulletin board at the County Administrative Offices, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC, and the County Council website [www.oconeesc.com/council]. In addition, it was made available [*upon request*] to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Members of the press present: Caleb Gilbert and Sean Smith / The Journal, Dick Mangurm / 101.7 WGOG

Staff Present: Kevin Robinson / County Assessor, Brittney Martin / Grants Administrator

Call to Order:

Mr. Durham called the meeting to order at 9:02 a.m.

Moment of Silence

Mr. Durham asked for a moment of silence.

Invocation

Mr. Root, County Council Chaplain, gave the invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Mr. Elliott led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Annual Review

Mr. Jones, County Administrator, addressed Council utilizing a PowerPoint presentation entitled "Oconee County Strategic Planning Retreat February 20, 2026" [copy in backup] and gave a brief presentation regarding County departmental updates.

Mr. Jones then identified and provided details related to the following key areas that Administration will be focusing on in FY 2026/2027.

1. Budget FY 25/26 Projections
2. Identify, Standardize and Implement
3. Controls – Insurance, Policies/Procedures, Continuity Planning and Communications.
4. Restructuring – Building Codes, Planning and Emergency Services
5. Greater Transparency

Strategic Goals Discussion

Each Council member gave a brief overview of their FY 2026/2027 priorities.

Mr. Elliott noted he would like to see the hiring of a Deputy Administrator and possibly the additions of an internal audit department/position.

Mr. Mize noted he would like to see a complete restructure of the County Administration department, improved governmental efficiency and cost savings, address the municipality fire contracts, and implement a municipal overlay project starting with the City of Seneca.

Mr. James noted he would like to see a revision of regulations contained within ordinances and improvement in customer service.

Mr. Durham noted he is in favor of an internal audit department and would like to work with Fire Service Advisory Commission and County Fire leadership to develop a long-range plan for County Fire services, pursue an in-house paving crew, improvement in customer service and focus on the FY2026/2027 budget.

Mr. Hart stated he would also like to see an in-house paving crew and noted that Sewer South is progressing on Exit 4 and believes this will be a positive year for Oconee County.

Mr. Durham added that this coming year is the 250th anniversary of our nation and he would like find a way to use ATAX funds to sponsor a County celebration(s).

Mr. Shirley, PRT Director, noted a local committee has been working on a calendar of events to commemorate the 250th anniversary.

Mrs. Brittney Martin provided updates regarding FEMA reimbursement from Hurricane Helene and a short discussion followed regarding these reimbursements.

Mr. Durham noted he would like to revise the Oconee County Emergency Ordinance as it relates to emergency declarations.

Additional matters / considerations related to budget development and County resources

Mr. Durham noted he would like to revisit Council priorities once a better picture of the FY 2026/2027 budget has been captured.

Mr. Mize noted that the City of Seneca would like to collaborate with the County to help restore the Utica Community.

Mr. Hart provided an update as to the progression of sewer construction at Exit 4.

Mr. Durham provided details related to a recent meeting with Prisma EMS regarding the ambulance services they provide to the County.

Mr. Durham offered a reminder of the Millage Workshop that Mrs. Christy Hubbard, County Auditor, has scheduled for 10:30 a.m. on Wednesday, March 4, 2026 in council chambers.

Mr. Kevin Robinson, County Assessor, offered details related to property reassessment and how it relates to millage.

A short discussion followed related to property reassessment, millage and FY 2025/2026 budget.

Adjourn:

Mr. Hart made a motion, approved unanimously, to adjourn at 10:01 a.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jennifer C. Adams
Clerk to Council

An audio recording of this off-site Strategic Planning Retreat meeting is available upon request to the Council Clerk, Jennifer C. Adams, by calling 864-718-1023 or email at jennifercadams@oconeesc.com.