



# MINUTES

## OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

### Regular Meeting

### March 17, 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 at 6:00 PM in Council Chambers, 415 South Pine Street, Walhalla, SC with all Council Members, County Administrator Stewart Jones, Deputy Administrator Mr. Phil Shirley [absent], County Attorney David Root, & Jennifer C. Adams, Clerk to Council 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](http://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 / The Journal

#### **Call to Order**

Mr. Durham called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

#### **Moment of Silence**

Mr. Durham asked for a moment of silence prior to the Invocation.

#### **Invocation by County Council Chaplain**

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

#### **Pledge of Allegiance**

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

#### **Attorney's Comments**

None for this meeting.

#### **Administrator's Comments**

None for this meeting.

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## **Consent Agenda**

*[Consent agendas are used to more quickly dispose of routine business by allowing Council to approve more than one item at the same time, without debate, amendment, or individual motions. If a Council member requests discussion about one or more of these items, that item(s) will be removed from the consent agenda and placed on the regular agenda to be discussed later in the meeting.]*

### **1. March 03, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes**

Mr. James made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 – 0, to approve all items on consent agenda as presented.

## **Public Comment Session**

*If you are unable to attend in person and you have a comment you would like to be considered by Council, please email or call the Council Member for your district (<https://oconeesc.com/council-home/council-officials>), so that they may consider and perhaps include your comments during Council Member comments, as and if appropriate.*

1. Mr. David Hurt addressed Council with concerns regarding litter/trash on roadways and properties throughout the County.
2. Ms. Erica Magee addressed Council with her concerns regarding safety and traffic impact on Armstrong Rd. related a proposed housing development in the area.
3. Mr. Lee Shehan addressed Council with concerns related the County’s financial deficits and budget management.

## **Council Members Comments**

Mr. Durham addressed Ms. Magee’s public comment, noting Armstrong Rd. is a State road.

Mr. Root commented that since this was a State road, it is likely that the traffic impact study was performed for the State.

Mr. Durham addressed Mr. Shehan’s concerns related to the County’s financial shortfall and budget management.

## **Third Reading of the Following Ordinances**

None for this meeting.

## **Second Reading of the Following Ordinances**

None for this meeting.

## **First Reading of the Following Ordinances**

**ORDINANCE 2026-04** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE VI OF CHAPTER 32 OF THE OCONEE COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, ENTITLED “LAND DEVELOPMENT AND SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS” AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO.

**ORDINANCE 2026-05** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING ARTICLE IX OF CHAPTER 32 OF THE OCONEE COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, ENTITLED “RECREATIONAL VEHICLE PARK STANDARDS” AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO.

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**ORDINANCE 2026-06** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING DIVISION 1 OF ARTICLE I OF CHAPTER 26 OF THE OCONEE COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, ENTITLED “UNIFIED ROAD STANDARDS FOR THE UNINCORPORATED AREAS OF OCONEE COUNTY” AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO.

Mr. Durham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 – 0, to forward **Ordinance 2026-04**, **Ordinance 2026-05** and **Ordinance 2026-06** on to the appropriate Council sub-committee for further review.

**ORDINANCE 2026-07** AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 10-275 (“EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT DIVISION”) OF CHAPTER 10 OF THE OCONEE COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES, IN CERTAIN LIMITED REGARDS AND PARTICULARS ONLY, WITH RESPECT TO THE MEANS OF ISSUING AN EMERGENCY DECLARATION; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO.

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, to approve **Ordinance 2026-07** on first reading.

Mr. Durham noted that Mr. Root has details related to a proposed amendment to **Ordinance 2026-07** on first reading.

Mr. Root provided details to Council related to a proposed amendment to Section 10-275 (a) 5b v “Emergency management division” of the Oconee County Code of Ordinances.

Mr. Durham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 – 0, to approved amendments to **Ordinance 2026-07**, as provided by Mr. Root.

Amended **Ordinance 2026-07** approved, 5 – 0.

**ORINANCE 2026-08** AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A REAL PROPERTY LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN OCONEE COUNTY, SOUTH CAROLINA, AS LESSOR, AND THE HOLLY SPRINGS FIRE DEPARTMENT, INC., AS LESSEE, FOR CERTAIN IMPROVED REAL PROPERTY LOCATED AT 11095 LONG CREEK HWY, WESTMINSTER, SOUTH CAROLINA, 29693, CURRENTLY IDENTIFIED BY TAX MAP NUMBER 201-00-01-048; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO.

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. James, approved 5 – 0, to approve **Ordinance 2026-08** on first reading.

### **First & Final Reading for the Following Resolutions**

None for this meeting.

### **Action on Matters Removed from Consent Agenda at Council Member Request**

None for this meeting.

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## **Discussion Regarding Action Items**

### *Discussion and direction on Law Enforcement Vehicle Protective Equipment*

Mr. Durham provided background details related to previous approval by Council to upfit all new Sheriff's Department vehicles with ballistic protection and further noted that only the first round of new vehicles actually received the ballistic protection installs.

Mr. Elliott made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 – 0, directing County Administrator to facilitate upfitting of all new and future Law Enforcement vehicles with ballistic protection as previously approved by Council.

*Consider for approval a Memorandum of Understanding between Oconee County and the Corinth-Shiloh Special Purpose Tax District for Fire Protection regarding medical oversight and emergency medical service provision.*

Mr. Mike Carroll with Emergency Services provided Council with background information related to the above request.

Mr. Durham inquired about on-staff, certified Paramedics' ability to respond to emergency medical calls.

Mr. Carroll noted that the County would have to meet certain State standards and obtain a higher level of licensing as an organization to enable on-staff certified Paramedics to respond to emergency medical calls.

Mr. Durham requested that the above topic be added to the agenda for discussion at the next Law Enforcement, Public Safety, Health and Welfare Committee meeting.

Mr. James made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 – 0, to approve a Memorandum of Understanding between Oconee County and the Corinth-Shiloh Special Purpose Tax District for Fire Protection regarding medical oversight and emergency medical service provision.

*Council discussion for the amendment to the FY 2024 National Dam Safety Program Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential DAM (HHPD) grant application to the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services on behalf of the Chattooga Lake Club.*

Mr. Root provided Council with background information related to the above request.

Mr. Mize made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 – 0, to approve the amendment to the FY 2024 National Dam Safety Program Rehabilitation of High Hazard Potential DAM (HHPD) grant application to the South Carolina Department of Environmental Services on behalf of the Chattooga Lake Club.

Mr. Mize noted that none of the above requested funding is from the County.

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*PRT Commission-Local ATAX Recommendations / Spring 2026 Cycle / \$142,474*

A portion of Local ATAX revenues received by Oconee County are made available for ATAX grants through Ordinance 2011-12. ATAX grants are to be tourism related grants that meet the ATAX guidelines specified by local and State mandates. Grants are recommended by the PRT Commission based on tourism impact of the project and approved by County Council. All external ATAX grant recipients are required to turn in intermediate reports every 60 days to the progress of the grant and a final report upon completion of the grant.

These reports are placed in the grant folder, which is kept active by the PRT staff until the grant is considered complete. Internal projects through Oconee PRT are also funneled through local ATAX for eligible projects.

**Beginning Local ATAX available balance: \$257,715**

**If all grants/projects approved/new balance will be: \$115,241**

*It is the staff's recommendation that Council approve the local ATAX recommendations as presented.*

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, to approve the local ATAX recommendations as presented.

Mr. Hart recommended that a County Council member assist PRT Director, Mr. Phil Shirley, with local ATAX grant applications and added comments related to several of the requested grants shown below.

Mr. Elliott made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 – 0, to approve postponing the approval of local ATAX recommendations as presented below to the April 7, 2026 Council meeting when Mr. Shirley is available to answer Council inquiries.

**Mar-26**

**Local ATAX Grants**

Applicant	Funds Request	Project Description	Amount Eligible for ATAX	PRT Commission Recommendation
City of Seneca	\$10,000	Advertising-Independence Day Celebration	\$10,000	\$5,000
City of Walhalla	\$15,059	Extend power/purchase vending machine	\$15,059	\$2,000
City of Westminster	\$2,000	Website for William Bartram Statue project	\$2,000	\$600
Discover Upcountry SC	\$15,000	Advertising	\$15,000	\$7,500
Eagles Nest Art Center	\$7,320	Advertising and upgrades	\$7,320	\$4,000
Lake Hartwell Country	\$10,000	Advertising	\$10,000	\$5,000
South Carolina Apple Festival	\$10,000	Advertising	\$6,000	\$4,000
The FARM Center	\$20,000	Digital sign, facility signage	\$20,000	\$3,600
Upstate Heritage Quilt Trail	\$1,622	Advertising, equipment, digital marketing	\$1,622	\$1,000
Walhalla Performing Arts Center	\$12,000	Advertising 2026 Season	\$12,000	\$6,650
Westminster Music Center	\$11,083	2026 Music on Main	\$11,083	\$6,650
Wild Hearts Equine Therapeutic Center	\$6,000	Construct RV sites and advertising	\$6,000	\$4,000
	<b>\$120,084</b>		<b>\$116,084</b>	<b>\$50,000</b>
<b>PRT Internal Request</b>				
PRT	South Cove Pavilion Repair	\$30,000	Construction repairs to unsafe posts	\$30,000
PRT	South Cove Maintenance	\$7,000	Emergency repairs-Restroom HVAC/Office	\$7,000
PRT	Chau Ram Mower	\$12,100	State Contract mower replacement	\$12,100
PRT	Granicus Contract	\$33,374	3-year renewal Short Term Rental software	\$33,374
PRT	Horton Complex sign	\$10,000	Partnership w/ Westminster-digital sign	\$10,000
		<b>\$92,474</b>	<b>\$92,474</b>	<b>\$92,474</b>
<b>Total</b>				<b>\$142,474</b>

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## **Council Committee Reports**

Mr. Durham provided information outlining discussions held at the March 03, 2026 and March 11, 2026 Budget, Finance and Administration Committee meetings.

## **Board & Commission Appointments**

### **Building Codes Appeal Board..... 1 At-Large Seat**

No questionnaires on file requesting consideration of appointment.

### **Corinth Shiloh Special Tax District for Fire Protection Commission ..... 1 Seat**

Mr. Durham made a nomination, unanimously approved, to appoint Mr. Flint Baldwin to serve on the Corinth Shiloh Special Tax District for Fire Protection Commission.

## **Executive Session**

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. James, approved 5 – 0, to enter into Executive Session for the following purposes, as allowed for § 30-4-70(a) of the South Carolina Code of Laws:

1. *Discussion regarding an economic development matter, Project Deer.*
2. *Receive legal advice and discuss potential contractual matters regarding the provision of emergency services.*
3. *Receive legal advice and discuss potential property acquisition and related contractual matters.*
4. *Receive legal advice and discuss potential contractual matter regarding utilities / infrastructure project(s).*
5. *Receive legal advice and discuss fiscal / accounting review processes.*
6. *Receive legal advice and discuss contractual issues – health care / employee benefits.*
7. *Discuss personnel matter regarding prospective county attorney hiring.*
8. *Discuss personnel matter related to Boards / Commissions.*

Council entered into Executive Session at 6:37 p.m.

Council returned from Executive Session at 9:20 p.m. on a motion made by Mr. James, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 – 0.

Following executive session, Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, to direct County Administrator to hire Mr. Rob Chumley as the new in-house County Attorney as discussed, with employment to begin on March 30, 2026, and to authorize County Administrator to engage with Mr. Root, Interim County Attorney, to assist with the transition.

Mr. Durham extended his thanks to Mr. Root for his years of service and dedication to Oconee County.

Motion approved, 5 – 0.

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**Adjourn:**

Mr. Hart made a motion, approved unanimously, to adjourn at 9:21 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Jennifer C. Adams  
Clerk to Council

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