



MINUTES

OCONEE COUNTY COUNCIL

Regular Meeting

May 5, 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 Phil Shirley, County Attorney Rob Chumley, & 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]. In addition, it was made available [*upon request*] to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

Members of the press present: Dick Mangrum / 101.7 WGOG

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

Mr. James gave the Invocation.

Pledge of Allegiance

Coach Byron Wimphrie and the Walhalla High Girls' Varsity Basketball team led the Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America.

Attorney's Comments

None for this meeting.

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Administrator's Comments

Mr. Jones offered a welcoming introduction the new Planning Director, Ms. DeAnn Hester, and to the new Emergency Services Director, Mr. Richie Caudill.

Mr. Jones also announced that due to fuel expenses and other factors, the recycling of plastics at the convenience centers has been paused for the moment.

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. April 21, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes

2. April 29, 2026 Special Meeting Minutes

3. Procurement Item:

Kubota Tractor

Department: Airport

Amount: \$80,596.42

Procurement was approved by Council in Fiscal Year 2025-2026 budget process
(Ordinance 2026-09)

Budget: \$80,596.42 Project Cost: \$80,596.42 Balance: \$0.00

It is the staff's recommendation that Council:

1. *Approve the purchase of a Kubota Tractor with Land Pride Attachments from Oakway Tractor, Inc of Seneca, SC, in the amount of \$80,596.42, per Sourcewell Contract #'s 082923-KBA & 032525-LPI.*
2. *Authorize the County Administrator to transfer funds to the appropriate line item.*

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

Proclamations

PROCLAMATION 2026-04 A PROCLAMATION HONORING THE WALHALLA HIGH SCHOOL GIRLS' VARSITY BASKETBALL TEAM ON THEIR SECOND CLASS 3A STATE CHAMPIONSHIP

Mr. Elliott made a motion, seconded by Mr. James, approved 5 – 0, to approve **Proclamation 2026-04** on first and final reading.

PROCLAMATION 2026-05 A PROCLAMATION FOR THE NATIONAL DAY OF PRAYER

Mr. James made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 – 0, to approve **Proclamation 2026-05** on first and final reading.

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PROCLAMATION 2026-06 A PROCLAMATION FOR PEACE OFFICERS' MEMORIAL DAY

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 – 0, to approve **Proclamation 2026-06** on first and final reading.

Presentation To Council

Appalachian Council of Government – Mr. Steve Pelissier / Executive Director

Mr. Steve Pelissier, AGOC Executive Director, provided Council with a brief overview of services and investments in Oconee County within the last year.

Mr. Elliott and Mr. Hart extended their thanks to Mr. Pelissier and ACOG for all they do for Oconee County.

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. Devin Clay addressed Council with his concerns related to Moratorium **Ordinance 2026-15**.
2. Mr. Tom Markovich addressed Council in opposition to Moratorium **Ordinance 2026-15**.
3. Mr. Lee Sheehan posed 4 questions [copy in backup] to Council related to **Moratorium Ordinance 2026-15**.

Council Members Comments

Mr. Durham noted that he would provide further information on Moratorium **Ordinance 2026-15** at first reading later in the meeting.

Public Hearing for the Following Ordinances *If you would like to be heard during either of the public hearings, please contact Clerk to Council Jennifer C. Adams at jennifercadams@oconeesc.com or 864-718-1023 so that your participation may be coordinated.*

ORDINANCE 2026-10 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE CONVEYANCE OF EASEMENT RIGHTS TO BLUE RIDGE ELECTRIC COOPERATIVE, INC., FOR THE PURPOSE OF UTILITY INFRASTRUCTURE CONSTRUCTION AND MAINTENANCE AT PROPERTY OWNED BY OCONEE COUNTY IN SENECA, SOUTH CAROLINA, CURRENTLY DESIGNATED BY OCONEE COUNTY TAX MAP NUMBERS 268-00-03-104 AND 268-00-03-089; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO.

Mr. Durham opened the floor for Public Comment.

Noting that no citizens signed up to address Council; Mr. Durham opened the floor for any citizen wishing to address Council regarding this ordinance. No citizen addressed Council and no citizen submitted or presented any written comments for the record.

Mr. Durham closed the Public Hearing regarding **Ordinance 2026-10**.

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Third Reading of the Following Ordinances

ORDINANCE 2026-10 *(see caption above)*

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 – 0, to approve **Ordinance 2026-10** on third and final reading.

Second Reading of the Following Ordinances

None for this meeting.

First Reading of the Following Ordinances

ORDINANCE 2026-01 AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH THE BUDGET FOR OCONEE COUNTY AND PROVIDE FOR THE LEVY OF TAXES FOR ORDINARY COUNTY PURPOSES, FOR THE TRI-COUNTY TECHNICAL COLLEGE SPECIAL REVENUE FUND, FOR THE EMERGENCY SERVICES PROTECTION SPECIAL REVENUE FUND, FOR THE ROAD MAINTENANCE SPECIAL REVENUE FUND, FOR THE VICTIM SERVICES SPECIAL REVENUE FUNDS, FOR THE STATE ACCOMMODATIONS TAX SPECIAL REVENUE FUND, FOR THE LOCAL ACCOMMODATIONS TAX SPECIAL REVENUE FUND, FOR THE COMMUNITY HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES SPECIAL REVENUE FUND, FOR THE ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT CAPITAL PROJECT FUND, FOR THE BRIDGE AND CULVERT CAPITAL PROJECT FUND, FOR THE CAPITAL VEHICLE / EQUIPMENT FUND, FOR THE PARKS, RECREATION, AND TOURISM CAPITAL PROJECTS FUND, FOR THE FIRE / EMERGENCY SERVICES CAPITAL VEHICLE AND EQUIPMENT FUND, FOR THE GENERAL ONE TIME CAPITAL FUND, AND FOR THE DEBT SERVICE FUND, ALL IN OCONEE COUNTY FOR THE **FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2026 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2027.**
(in title only)

Mr. Elliott made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, to approve **Ordinance 2026-01** on first reading in title only.

Mr. Durham noted the formation of FY 2026-2027 budget is still a work in progress.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

ORDINANCE 2026-02 AN ORDINANCE TO ESTABLISH THE BUDGET FOR THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF OCONEE COUNTY AND TO PROVIDE FOR THE LEVY OF TAXES FOR THE OPERATIONS OF THE SCHOOL DISTRICT OF OCONEE COUNTY FOR THE **FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2026 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2027.**
(in title only)

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, approved 5 - 0, to approve **Ordinance 2026-02** on first reading in title only.

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ORDINANCE 2026-03 AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE LEVY OF TAXES FOR THE KEOWEE FIRE TAX DISTRICT AND TO ESTABLISH THE BUDGET FOR THE KEOWEE FIRE TAX DISTRICT FOR THE **FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2026 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2027.** *(in title only)*

Mr. Elliott made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, to approve **Ordinance 2026-03** on first reading in title only.

Mr. Elliott noted the Keowee Fire Tax District has formed very conservative budget.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

ORDINANCE 2026-12 AN ORDINANCE TO PROVIDE FOR THE LEVY OF TAXES FOR THE CORINTH-SHILOH SPECIAL PURPOSE TAX DISTRICT FOR FIRE PROTECTION AND TO ESTABLISH THE BUDGET FOR THE CORINTH-SHILOH SPECIAL PURPOSE TAX DISTRICT FOR FIRE PROTECTION FOR THE **FISCAL YEAR BEGINNING JULY 1, 2026 AND ENDING JUNE 30, 2027.** *(in title only)*

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mize, approved 5 - 0, to approve **Ordinance 2026-12** on first reading in title only.

ORDINANCE 2026-13 AN ORDINANCE AUTHORIZING THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF A REAL PROPERTY LEASE AGREEMENT BETWEEN OCONEE COUNTY, AS LESSOR, AND OCONEE HISTORY MUSEUM, INC., AS LESSEE, FOR CERTAIN REAL PROPERTY, KNOWN AS THE TOBACCO BARN, LOCATED AT 123 BROWN SQUARE DRIVE, WALHALLA, SOUTH CAROLINA; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO. *(in title only)*

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. James, approved 5 - 0, to approve **Ordinance 2026-13** on first reading in title only.

ORDINANCE 2026-14 AN ORDINANCE TO EXEMPT FROM THE PROPERTY TAX, FORTY-TWO AND 75/100 PERCENT OF THE FAIR MARKET VALUE OF A WATERCRAFT AND ITS MOTOR PURSUANT TO S.C. CODE ANN. SECTION 12-37-220 (B)(38)(B). *(in title only)*

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mize, to approve **Ordinance 2026-14** on first reading in title only.

Mr. Durham provided clarification related to **Ordinance 2026-14**.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

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ORDINANCE 2026-15 AN ORDINANCE TO IMPOSE A MORATORIUM ON ANY NEW CONSTRUCTION OR DEVELOPMENT OF PLANNED SUBDIVISIONS SEEKING TO ESTABLISH MORE THAN 10 RESIDENTIAL DWELLING UNITS, AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO. *(in title only) Requested by Councilman Mr. Don Mize*

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mize, to approve **Ordinance 2026-15** on first reading in title only.

Mr. Mize offered a personal statement related to **Ordinance 2026-15**.

Mr. Durham provided information related to **Ordinance 2026-15**, noting he is in agreeance with the enactment of this ordinance.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

ORDINDNCE 2026-16 AN ORDINANCE TO AUTHORIZE THE EXECUTION AND DELIVERY OF AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT WITH THE CITY OF SENECA FOR THE ADMINISTRATION AND OPERATION OF 911 AND DISPATCH COMMUNICATION SERVICES; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO.
(in title only)

Mr. Elliott made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, to approve **Ordinance 2026-16** on first reading in title only.

Mr. Durham noted that the City of Seneca is currently the only municipality that operates their own dispatch service and by partnering with the County, he believes it will give a better quality of service.

Chief Casey Bowling with the City of Seneca, stated that the unifying of City of Seneca dispatch services with Oconee County will be beneficial to all residents.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

ORDINANCE 2026-17 AN ORDINANCE TO AMEND CHAPTER 38 OF THE OCONEE COUNTY CODE OF ORDINANCES TO RENAME THE "CONTROL FREE DISTRICT" AND ITS ABBREVIATION "CFD" TO THE "GENERAL USE DISTRICT" AND "GUD" RESPECTIVELY, AND TO MAKE CONFORMING CHANGES THROUGHOUT CHAPTER 38; AND OTHER MATTERS RELATED THERETO. *(in title only)*

Mr. Mize made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, to approve **Ordinance 2026-17** on first reading in title only.

Mr. Durham offered clarifying information related to **Ordinance 2026-17**, proposing the renaming of the “Control Free District / CFD” to “General Use District / GUD”.

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Motion approved 5 – 0.

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.

Discussion Regarding Action Items

Approval for the Transfer of Funds, in the Amount of \$13,900.00, to Cover the Reduced Probate Court Budget

The Oconee County Administrator is authorized to transfer between salary appropriations and non-salary appropriations within a department, or between departments within a fund, provided that no such transfer exceeds Ten Thousand and 00/100 (\$10,000) Dollars.

The maximum sum of such transfers has occurred during the current fiscal year, requiring Council authorization for all salary appropriation transfers going forward.

Probate Court is requesting a budget transfer to cover expenditures that were reduced by the previous County Administrator. The reduction was to be covered via a transfer from the Administrator’s Contingency line item, if needed. Due to the reductions, the Probate Court accounts are currently with negative balances.

Funding is available as a result of the Assessor’s employee vacancies, resulting in available, budgeted funds in the employee health insurance fringe account.

Staff recommends Council approve the transfer of funds from the Assessor’s health insurance fringe account to various Probate Court line items.

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. James, approved 5 - 0, to approve the transfer of funds from the Assessor’s health insurance fringe account to various Probate Court line items.

Approval for the Transfer of Funds, in the Amount of \$15,000.00, to Cover Expenditures Related to May Jury Summons Court Costs

The Oconee County Administrator is authorized to transfer between salary appropriations and non-salary appropriations within a department, or between departments within a fund, provided that no such transfer exceeds Ten Thousand and 00/100 (\$10,000) Dollars.

The maximum sum of such transfers has occurred during the current fiscal year, requiring Council authorization for all salary appropriation transfers going forward.

The Clerk of Court is requesting a budget transfer to cover expenditures related to a May Jury Summons of approximately 700+ jurors.

Funding is available from unfilled employee positions budgeted in the Assessor’s Salary line item.

Staff recommends Council approve the transfer of funds from salaries for costs associated with the Clerk of Court’s May Jury Summons.

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Elliott, to approve the transfer of funds from salaries for costs associated with the Clerk of Court’s May Jury Summons.

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Mr. Durham noted this request is in relation to the trial of the individual who shot Deputy Watts in the line of duty.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

Approval for the Transfer of Funds, in the amount of \$70,000.00, to provide grant match funds for the City of Walhalla Fire Department's grant

The Oconee County Administrator is authorized to transfer between salary appropriations and non-salary appropriations within a department, or between departments within a fund, provided that no such transfer exceeds Ten Thousand and 00/100 (\$10,000) Dollars. The Administrator has reached the maximum approval limit for such transfers and now must obtain Council approval.

On May 20, 2025, County Council made a motion, approved by a 4 – 0 vote, directing County Administrator to identify funding, in the amount of \$70,000.00, for the City of Walhalla to provide fire and emergency response to County citizens and citizens/businesses within City limits. However, the funding was omitted from the Fiscal Year 2025-2026 Budget Ordinance for the third and final reading.

Available funding has been identified in employee fringe accounts with surplus balances resulting from unfilled positions in the Roads and Bridges (601) and Solicitor (504) Departments.

Staff recommends that Council approve the transfer of budgeted funds from Roads and Bridges and the Solicitor's Department to provide the required grant math for the Walhalla Fire Department.

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. Mize, to approve the transfer of budgeted funds from Roads and Bridges and the Solicitor's Department to provide the required grant match for the Walhalla Fire Department.

Mr. Durham noted this request was actually voted on and approved by Council last year but was never completed.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

Approval for the Transfer of Funds, in the Amount of \$66,320.00, to Cover the Building Codes RCI Invoices for April 2026-June 2026

The Oconee County Administrator is authorized to transfer between salary appropriations and non-salary appropriations within a department, or between departments within a fund, provided that no such transfer exceeds Ten Thousand and 00/100 (\$10,000) Dollars. The Administrator has reached the maximum approval limit for such transfers and now must obtain Council approval.

Due to the increased volume of inspection services and commercial plan reviews, the current budget for these expenditures is no longer sufficient to cover the RCI invoices associated with the additional inspections. Although the revenue collected under Building Codes' Plan Review Fee (010-080-00805-13705) is intended to offset the RCI billings, accounting rules prevent these revenues from being posted to the expenditure code – and likewise prevent expenditures from being posted to the revenue code. As a result, the professional services expenditure line requires a budget transfer.

Funding is available from budgeted employee fringe accounts with surplus balances created by unfilled positions in the Solicitor (504) and Solid Waste (718) departments.

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Staff recommends that Council approve the transfer of budgeted funds from the unused fringe accounts of the Solicitor, Clerk of Court, and Solid Waste Departments to cover Building Codes Department's RCI inspection invoices for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (April – June).

Mr. Elliott made a motion, seconded by Mr. James, to approve the transfer of budgeted funds from the unused fringe accounts of the Solicitor, Clerk of Court, and Solid Waste Departments to cover Building Codes Department's RCI inspection invoices for the remainder of Fiscal Year 2025-2026 (April – June).

Mr. Hart stated that he hopes this is the last time he has to vote on a request of this nature.

Motion approved 5 – 0.

Council Committee Reports

Mr. Durham provided information outlining discussions held at the April 21, 2026 Budget, Finance and Administration Committee meeting.

Mr. Durham also provided information related to the request of a “floating” School Resource Office, noting the County and the SDOC are working together on this need.

Board & Commission Appointments

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

No questionnaires on file requesting consideration of appointment.

Agricultural Advisory Board District 1

One questionnaire on file requesting consideration of appointment.

No nominations were made for the vacant District 1 seat on the Agricultural Advisory Board.

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 Hawk.*
- 2. Receive legal advice and discuss potential contractual matters related to Emergency Services.*
- 3. Discuss a contractual matter regarding law enforcement safety equipment.*
- 4. Discussion of personnel matters related to Emergency Services and regarding a pending threatened or potential claim.*
- 5. Receive legal advice and discuss contractual matter regarding pending threatened or potential claim.*
- 6. Receive legal advice and discuss contractual and personnel matters regarding Roads and Bridges.*

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Council entered into Executive Session at 6:57 p.m.

Council returned from Executive Session at 9:57 p.m. on a motion made by Mr. James, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 – 0.

Mr. Durham made a motion, seconded by Mr. Hart, approved 5 – 0, to direct County Administrator to negotiate the sale of a County owned property as discussed in executive session.

Mr. Hart made a motion, seconded by Mr. James, approved 5 – 0, to approve the purchase of ballistics, not to exceed \$154,000.00, and to direct the County Administrator to execute this purchase and any change orders.

Adjourn:

Mr. Hart made a motion, approved unanimously, to adjourn at 9:58 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Jennifer C. Adams
Clerk to Council

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