



# MINUTES

## County Council Meeting

General Session

Monday, August 17, 2020

Spartanburg County Council met on Monday, August 17, 2020, in the County Council Chambers of the County Administrative Office Building. The following were in attendance: Honorable Manning Lynch, Chairman; Honorables Michael Brown, Jack Mabry, David Britt, Whitney Farr, Bob Walker, and Roger Nutt, Council Members; along with Cole Alverson, County Administrator; Earl Alexander, Deputy County Administrator; Ginny Dupont, County Attorney; and John Harris, County Attorney. In compliance with the Freedom of Information Act, notice of this meeting was provided in advance to the local news media and other interested parties.

Meeting was live streamed via YouTube. Links and instructions for how to access this meeting via computer or mobile device were made available on the County's webpage and provided to the local media.

- I. Chairman Lynch called the meeting to order.
- II. There was one item following Executive Session which required action. Motion made by Mr. Nutt for Staff to disperse accommodations tax funds as discussed in Executive Session. Motion seconded by Mr. Britt and carried.
- III. Motion made by Mr. Britt to appoint Nicole Hall, Internal Auditor, to the Employee Grievance Committee. Motion seconded by Mr. Nutt and carried.
- IV. Mr. Henry Laye, Director of Registration and Elections, presented information in reference to provisions to ensure a **Fair Voting Process** coming up in the General Election. We are facing unusual times, not just in our daily lives, but also with respect to our elections. In the June primary, all of our poll workers were equipped with personal protective equipment. To Mr. Laye's knowledge, none of

our poll workers have reported exposure to COVID or come down with it. The same personal protective equipment will be in place for our election in November. Mr. Laye stated that he has been here close to fourteen years, and he has not seen so much activity this far in advance of an election. His prediction for November is a record turnout. In 2016 in Spartanburg County, we had a 68.5% turnout. About 178,000 voters turned out to vote. Thirty-two percent of our registered voters did not vote. Mr. Laye predicts a 72.5% turnout this year which would equal about 195,000 voters. This translates into how the voting locations are staffed, and how the equipment is put in place. A record number of voting machines will be put at each precinct. Unlike in previous years, numerous people want to become poll managers this year. About 300 people are being trained through the online courses that have never worked a poll before. If we do this, our voting process in person will be more efficient, more pleasant, and safer. However, with COVID in mind, Mr. Laye predicts that we will have people standing in line with social distancing and long wait times. In-person absentee voting will begin Monday, October 5, 2020. We have historically done this in Conference Room Six. In 2016, we put 21,000 people through Conference Room Six. Mr. Alverson and Mr. Laye have had initial discussions about trying to use Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium. They would have the indoor space and parking space. Absentee voting by mail is up. To date, over 8,200 absentee applications have been issued by mail. We have received over 4,600 back. People are energized by this election. They are willing to participate. Our 98 precincts are being contacted to see if we can use them as a voting site. We had 12 precincts for the June primary that we had to combine. Schools were not part of it. They were churches and some of the County fire departments. We have received about 26 positive responses back. We have some new voting sites. All the Counties are asking the Legislative Delegation to allow Voter Registration and Elections to begin processing absentee ballots on Friday before the election.

- V. Mr. Allen Smith, President/CEO, Spartanburg Area Chamber of Commerce, presented a **Bringing Back the Burg Update**. Bringing Back the Burg is Spartanburg's COVID-19 recovery effort. Information was presented by Mr. Smith from the <https://www.onespartanburginc.com/bringingbacktheburg> website. The initiative includes a Business Recovery Task Force. In the work of tourism development, 68 lacrosse teams were in town recently. This opportunity came to us from North Carolina. The Lake Norman Lacrosse Tourney left North Carolina because of some of the conditions in North Carolina. This was turned around in eight weeks

and resulted in 1100 room nights. Tourism and development too has landed the Junior College National Softball Championship for 2022 and 2023. This is 4100 room nights in 2022 and 2023. Despite the current situation, the Chamber is working 39 active economic development projects. The day-to-day work in the Chamber office is continuing on, but on top of it, they are also working to bring back our economy as well. The Co-chairs of the business recovery task force are Kay Woodward and Councilman David Britt. J.W. Woodward Funeral Home is the oldest minority owned business in Spartanburg County. The business was started in the midst of the 1918 Spanish flu. Kay Woodward comes from a long line of people that have overcome adversity including pandemics. Councilman Britt is all things economic development and business development here in Spartanburg County. He has a long track record of supporting the business community. Mr. Smith stated that they cannot do what they do without the support of Cole Alverson, the new County Administrator. The Task Force is made up of 33 people throughout the entire County. They are very diverse in terms of their sector. This entire effort is predicated on data. The Benchmark Charts were presented from the website. Spartanburg's businesses have been asked to make a commitment to combating COVID-19. Essentially, if a business agrees to take the commitment, they agree to follow the Center for Disease Control (CDC) Guidelines. As of August 17, 2020, 188 businesses have taken the commitment to combating COVID-19. The Bringing Back the 'Burg Small Business Fund was designed to financially assist qualifying small businesses through low interest and forgivable loans. COVID-19 testing has been expanded for Spartanburg County businesses. There is a 52% discount and a 48 hour guaranteed turnaround time for test results if a business goes through the Chamber. Mr. Allen thanked County Council for their support. Mr. Britt commended the Task Force on their outstanding work.

- VI. Mr. Andy Flynt, Director of Information Services, Spartanburg County Public Libraries, Leader of the Local 2020 Census Committee, presented information in reference to the **2020 Census**. Ms. Katherine Harvey, New South, was also in attendance. She has done a lot of the marketing for the 2020 Census. We are doing really well with the 2020 Census in Spartanburg County. The Census Bureau kicked off the 2020 Census Count on March 12, 2020. The U.S. response rate is 63.6% of all households. In South Carolina, 57.6% of all households have responded. This places the state at 44<sup>th</sup> in states and territories across the country. However, Spartanburg County has done much better. Our response rate is 62.7% putting us at 9<sup>th</sup> in the state out of the 46 counties. We have four municipalities, Lyman, Inman, Greer and Spartanburg, in the top

20% in the state. Because of COVID-19, the Census Bureau pushed the deadline to October 31, 2020. A few weeks ago, the Census Bureau moved the deadline to September 30, 2020. Mr. Flynt asked County Council to encourage the residents in their districts to participate in the Census and to encourage our business partners throughout the County to participate in the Census. If people want to avoid having someone knock on their door, they simply need to go online or call the Census Bureau and complete the Census in that way. The Census questionnaire only takes about ten minutes. Ms. Harvey emphasized how important it is for every person to be counted. Mr. Flynt stated that in the last fiscal year, \$3,000 per person came back into the State of South Carolina. If we miss one person, we lose \$30,000 over ten years. It is very important to encourage all of our residents to participate in the Census so that we get our fair share.

Meeting adjourned.

Spartanburg County Council

By:

  
A. Manning Lynch, Chairman

Attest:

  
Deborah C. Ziegler  
Clerk to Council