



City Council Worksession

Meeting Minutes – Planning Conference Room – 1st Floor

May 26, 2026

I. CALL TO ORDER

5:00 PM

Philip Cromer, Mayor

Members of Council in attendance - Philip Cromer, Neil Lipsitz, Michael McFee (5:10 arrival), Mitch Mitchell, Josh Scallate.

II. EMPLOYEE NEW HIRE RECOGNITION

A. City Manager's Office.

Scott Marshall, City Manager, introduced Danielle Logan.

B. Finance Department.

Alan Eisenman, Finance Director, introduced Samantha Witt.

C. Police Department.

Stephenie Price, Police Chief, introduced Evan Silva.

III. PRESENTATIONS

A. Boards, Commissions and Committees applicant interviews.

Council held a question and answer session with the following applicants for the various Boards, Commissions and Committees.

Eric Berman, Reese Fazekas, Robert Johnston, and Charlotte Lawrence.

IV. DISCUSSIONS

A. Seabrook Farms/McLeod Tract.

Scott Marshall, City Manager, stated this is a discussion regarding the Seabrook Farms property, also known as the McLeod Tract, located in the Seabrook area of northern Beaufort County. The focus of the discussion is aimed toward the procedural path forward for potential rezoning and development applications associated with the property, as well as the City's position regarding annexation. Depending on the outcome of the discussion, a Resolution may be presented for formal consideration at the June 9, 2026 City Council meeting.

The existing conservation easement includes provisions stating that adjacent property, including the Seabrook Farms property proposed for development, may not be annexed without prior consent from Beaufort County. The County has indicated that they cannot consider the request from the developer to be allowed to seek annexation in the city until the city has

indicated they do not desire to annex the property. Ordinarily, such a decision is the result of a formal annexation application to the city, which has not been submitted because the county has not agreed to allow the developer to seek annexation. This essentially creates a Catch 22 situation and created uncertainty regarding the appropriate procedural path forward.

Mr. Marshall mentioned the Seabrook Farms property is located within the Growth Boundary, and that it is not identified within the City's 2021 Comprehensive Plan as a Potential Annexation Area. City staff has also indicated that annexation is not considered feasible or desirable at this time due to issues involving access, contiguity, and municipal service considerations.

Billy Keyserling and Mr. Geier, with the Beaufort County School Board addressed Council on this issue. They provided some history on this property and how the existing conservation easement came to be.

Mr. Marshall will reach out to Beaufort County's Planning and Zoning Department Director, Rob Merchant, to determine what language should be included in the Resolution or other communicate to the County so the County can move forward with the developer's request.

B. Fiscal Year 2027 Budget Discussion.

Councilman Lipsitz stated regarding the previous discussion during the last regular meeting, he regrets not supporting the budget over all. Would like to get through tonight's discussion with a responsible, clear path forward. Would like to reach a gentleman's agreement that all meaningful discussion take place this evening to give staff direction of where to go moving forward. Does not want to see anything passed over and discussed at the next meeting.

Scott Marshall, City Manager, hopes that once the meeting adjourns tonight, staff will have a clear direction from Council to bring back a balanced budget. He explained why the TIF II funds amendment that was made by Council to give these funds to the Waterfront Park Project during first reading must be rescinded. Legal Counsel stated those funds need to be returned to Beaufort County and the Beaufort County School District. Mr. Marshall has prepared letters which were sent to each entity asking if the City could retain these funds and use them towards the Waterfront Park improvements. These decisions have to be made by their governing boards. The City cannot use any of those funds within the Fiscal Year 2027 budget at this time, except for the City's unrestricted funds.

Some of the project's staff feels must be pushed forward and funded are the Improvements needed at the Central Headquarters Fire Station, completion of the Duke Street Streetscape Project, and the IT Switch upgrades.

He spoke about anticipated revenues in the new Fiscal Year that cannot be projected at this time which deal with the sale of property.

Alan Eisenman, Finance Director, first went over the budget amendments that came out of first reading. This included the removal of the proposed Vehicle Tag Fee and reallocation of the TIF II Funds. He then went over staff budget recommendations for the Tag Fee Funds that were removed as they related to the General Fund Revenues and Expenditures. He provided a General Fund Impact figure of \$338,708.00 to cover the budget shortfall from the Tag Fee removal of \$322,560.00. He then went over other available budget options.

Members of Council stated what changes they would like to see made which included **Councilman Scallate's** regarding bringing the GIS position in house, striking the funding for the Comprehensive Plan, removing funding for the Beaufort County Economic Development Corporation, and deferring items like trashcan expenditures, and costs associated with a Side by Side Utility Vehicle.

Councilman Lipsitz wants the funding for the Beaufort Economic Development Corporation to remain. Mayor Cromer concurred and would like to see the same amounts provided to all Strategic Partners as they were last year.

Mr. Eisenman noted that if all the payments are to be the same as last year, other funding sources will need to be identified to cover those shortfalls.

Some of the Unfunded Priority List items are the 1st SC Volunteers Park, City Hall Roofing Repairs, Pigeon Point Boat Landing, Mower for Public Works, a Utility Vehicle for Downtown Operations and the Duke Street Streetscape Project. This list will be updated by staff prior to second reading.

The following addressed Council with their comments and concerns on topics discussed:

Lise Sundrla
Amanda Patel
Stacey Applegate
Rich Conte
Howell Beach
Peggy Simmer (written comments attached)

V. EXECUTIVE SESSION

- A. Pursuant to Title 30, Chapter 4, Section 70 (a) (1) of the South Carolina Code of Law: Discussion regarding personnel appointed by City Council - Boards, Commissions and Committees - Cultural District Advisory Board, Downtown Advisory Board, Historic District Review Board, Military Enhancement Committee, Planning Commission, Tourism Development Advisory Board, Zoning Board of Appeals.

Councilman Lipsitz made a motion to go into Executive Session and seconded by Mayor Pro Tem, McFee.

All were in favor, motion carried.

Mayor Pro Tem, McFee made a motion to come out of Executive Session and seconded by Councilman Mitchell.

All were in favor, motion carried.

No actions from Executive Session.

VI. ADJOURN

7:43 PM

Motion to adjourn was made by Mayor Pro Tem, McFee and seconded by Councilman Mitchell.

All were in favor, motion carried.

Disclaimer: This document is a summary. All City Council Worksessions and Regular Meetings are recorded. Live stream can be found on the City's website at www.cityofbeaufort.org (Agenda section). Any questions, please contact the City Clerk, Traci Guldner at 843-525-7024 or by email at tguldner@cityofbeaufort.org.

In accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80 (a)(d)(e), as amended, notification of regular meetings was given at the beginning of the calendar year. A copy of the agenda was posted on the City's bulletin board and website www.cityofbeaufort.org twenty-four hours prior to the meeting. A copy of the agenda was given to the local news media and requested public on file.

Approved: June 9, 2024
Traci Guldner



Traci Guldner

From: Peggy Simmer [REDACTED]
Sent: Tuesday, May 26, 2026 4:55 PM
To: Philip Cromer; Mike McFee; Phillip Scallate; Neil Lipsitz; Mitch Mitchell; Scott Marshall; Eric Claussen; Traci Guldner
Cc: Stacy Applegate; Dan Blackmon; Jeremiah Smith; Lise Sundrla; Jai Dowell; Peggy Simmer
Subject: FY2027 Budget Request for \$150,000 for the Critical Housing Repair Program
Attachments: Critical Housing Repair Program Funding Request to Beaufort City Council.26 MAY 2026.pdf

Importance: High

CAUTION: This email originated from outside your organization. Exercise caution when opening attachments or clicking links, especially from unknown senders.

Traci, please add this email and attached letter to the official minutes for tonight's, May 26, 2026, City Council Worksession.

THANK YOU!!! 😊

Hello Mayor Cromer, Members of Beaufort City Council, City Manager Scott Marshall, and Assistant City Manager Eric Claussen!

As community leaders we know how valuable and needed the Critical Housing Repair Program is.

And because of that, we are respectfully asking City Council to continue funding the Critical Housing Repair Program **at the same level in FY2027 as you did last year of \$150,000**, (and more if resources allow) and we as community leaders will continue doing our part to help our already vulnerable homeowners.

Our community organizations often partner together and the work that we do compliments the Critical Housing Repair Program - from our OCNA / NWQNA / LOVE Beaufort Days of Service to projects like saving the Mary M. Dunbar House. Please see the attached letter from us.

It truly takes a village and the City, as well the Beaufort Jasper Housing Trust matching funds, are a vital part of and major contributor to that village.

THANK YOU IN ADVANCE for your time and consideration of this FY2027 budget request.

Sincerely,
Dan Blackmon, President, Northwest Quadrant Neighborhood Association (NWQNA)

Stacy Applegate, Secretary, NWQNA

Jeremiah Smith, President, Old Commons Neighborhood Association

Peggy Simmer, Secretary, OCNA

Lise Sundrla, Executive Director, Historic Beaufort Foundation (HBF)

Jai Dowell, Director of Local Missions St. Helena Anglican, LOVE Beaufort

May 26, 2026

Dear Mayor Phil Cromer, Members of Beaufort City Council, City Manager Scott Marshall, and Assistant City Manager Eric Claussen,

First, we want to sincerely thank you.

Creating the City's critical home repair program was an important and meaningful step, and we know it did not happen overnight. Many residents, advocates, and community partners worked hard to bring attention to this need, and Council's willingness to take action was deeply appreciated.

Most importantly, the program has already demonstrated that the need is real.

In the most recent cycle, **23 Beaufort households applied for assistance, approximately 6 or 7 families will be helped due to funding limitations.** While that means many families remain in need, it also shows that the program is working exactly as intended: identifying vulnerable homeowners, addressing urgent repair needs, and helping Beaufort residents remain safely in their homes. *Source: <https://bjht.org/city-of-beaufort-repair/>*

For that, thank you.

We are writing to respectfully ask that the City build on this success **by allocating at least the same funding as last year of \$150,000 in the upcoming FY2027 budget for expanded critical home repair funding.**

For Beaufort, this is far more than a housing initiative.

It is a **historic preservation initiative, a neighborhood stabilization strategy, an economic investment, and a commitment to protecting the families who give our city its character and history.**

As stewards of one of the nation's most treasured historic communities, Beaufort has a unique responsibility. **Our National Historic Landmark District is not valuable simply because of beautiful buildings—it is valuable because it remains a living historic community, shaped by generations of residents whose stories are woven into these neighborhoods.**

When legacy homeowners can no longer afford critical repairs, the consequences are profound:

- Historic homes deteriorate and may become unsalvageable.
- Seniors and long-time residents on fixed incomes may be forced to leave.
- Families lose generational wealth.
- Neighborhood continuity is disrupted.
- Vacant or deteriorated homes negatively impact surrounding property values.
- Deferred maintenance becomes far more expensive public and private problems later.

We also recognize that the City is facing significant capital challenges, particularly the major long-term infrastructure needs at Waterfront Park. That work is important to our economy, public identity, and downtown vitality.

The waterfront project is a major multi-year capital infrastructure undertaking. Critical home repair funding is a comparatively modest, highly targeted investment that immediately improves lives, preserves housing, and prevents larger costs down the road.

A city can responsibly address major infrastructure while also protecting its residents and neighborhoods.

A relatively small public investment today can prevent blight, vacancy, emergency interventions, demolition, and displacement tomorrow. Preserving occupied historic homes may be one of the most cost-effective preservation tools available.

Visitors come to Beaufort because of its authenticity, charm, and sense of place. That authenticity depends not only on architecture, but on preserving the people and communities that created it.

Helping legacy homeowners remain in their homes is not separate from historic preservation, it can be central to it.

We respectfully ask Council to continue the leadership you showed in creating this program by matching last year's funding of \$150,000 in the upcoming FY2027 budget, and ideally more if resources allow.

THANK YOU AGAIN for taking the first step. It has already made a difference, and with additional support, it can become one of Beaufort's most meaningful preservation and housing success stories.

Respectfully,

Dan Blackmon, President, Northwest Quadrant Neighborhood Association (NWQNA)

Stacy Applegate, Secretary, NWQNA

Jeremiah Smith, President, Old Commons Neighborhood Association

Peggy Simmer, Secretary, OCNA

Lise Sundrla, Executive Director, Historic Beaufort Foundation (HBF)

Jai Dowell, Director of Local Missions St. Helena Anglican, LOVE Beaufort