

**MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
FAIRFIELD JOINT WATER SEWER SYSTEM  
JUNE 27, 2023**

**Present:** John McMeekin, Chairman; Doug Pauley, Vice Chairman; Jason Taylor, Treasurer; Laura Johnson, Kyle Crager, Robert Arndt, Don Prioleau, Commissioners.

**Others Present:** Patti L. Davis, Sara Weathers.

The Fairfield Joint Water Sewer Service met in regular session on June 27, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. at the Midlands Technical College Fairfield Campus. In accordance with the South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80 (e), as amended, the following persons and/or organizations have been notified of the time, date and location of this meeting: The Independent Voice of Blythewood and Fairfield, The Country Chronicle and other individuals associated with distribution lists for the Town of Winnsboro, Fairfield County and the Town of Ridgeway.

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Chairman McMeekin called the Regular Meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and requested for all cell phones to be cut off. It is also hard for everyone to hear if the audience is talking, and Chairman McMeekin asked for silence during the meeting.

**2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Motion made by Commissioner Crager, seconded by Commissioner Johnson, to approve the agenda. ***The motion carried 6-0.***

**3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion made by Vice Chair Pauley, seconded by Commissioner Crager, to approve the minutes from the Regular Meeting of April 23, 2023. ***The motion carried 6-0.*** Motion made by Commissioner Crager, seconded by Vice Chair Pauley, to approve the minutes from the Special Meeting of May 9, 2023. ***The motion carried 6-0.*** Motion made by Commissioner Taylor, seconded by Commissioner Crager, to approve the minutes from the Special Meeting of June 7, 2023. ***The motion carried 6-0.***

**4. PUBLIC HEARING**

**A.** Adoption of the Fairfield Joint System's Annual Budget for the 2023-2024 Fiscal Year. The FY 2023-24 Budget, as proposed, projects total revenues of \$99,050.00 and operating expenditures of \$99,050.00. The FY 2023-24 Budget is the first budget for the Fairfield Joint System; therefore, the Fairfield Joint System has not previously realized revenues or expenditures that may be compared against the revenues and expenditures included in

the FY 2023-24 Budget. The Fairfield Joint System currently derives all revenues from its membership and is not authorized to levy millage; therefore, the FY 2023-24 Budget does not include any revenues derived from millage. The Secretary announced the time of 6:03 p.m. to open the public hearing. No one signed to speak; therefore, the Secretary announced the time of 6:04 p.m. to close the public hearing.

**5. RESOLUTION NO.: 2023-02 Approving Annual Budget of the Fairfield Joint Water and Sewer System for the Fiscal Year Beginning July 1, 2023, and Ending June 30, 2024; Appropriating Funds in Accordance with Such Budget; and Other Matters Related Thereto.**

Vice Chair Pauley made a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2023-02, seconded by Commissioner Taylor. *The motion carried 6-0.*

**6. DISCUSSION OF SCIIP GRANT MEETING**

Chairman McMeekin stated this meeting was with the Rural Infrastructure Authority (RIA). Those present at the meeting were Laura Johnson, Synithia Williams, Jason Taylor, Chris Clauson and Chairman McMeekin. It was a very productive and positive meeting, but it was also a very serious meeting. A total of 70% of those who applied for this grant money received an award. We are on watch that the various Councils and everyone here cooperate and work together, because this will be an arduous process. So, 30% of those who applied did not receive an award. This money was given because we are cooperating and working together. Chairman McMeekin appreciates all those who participated in the meeting.

**7. RECOMMENDATIONS FROM TECHNICAL COMMITTEE CONCERNING ALTERNATIVES ANALYSIS.**

Commissioner Cramer reported the Technical Committee met at length last week to discuss the report. Coming out of the Committee is a recommendation that the full Commission consider a third-party blind opinion on a few select topics, primarily focused around the two primary options, Cedar Creek and Broad River. Also, as part of that recommendation, member organizations needed to take into account that they would need to potentially fund that third party review. Chairman McMeekin stated since this was motioned and seconded in the Technical Committee, it only needs a motion to be brought to the full Commission for acceptance. Mrs. Weathers agreed, and she would encourage the Commission to have some discussion perhaps around what aspects exactly will be reviewed by the third party and make that clear. Commissioner Johnson stated she cannot remember everything that she said at the last meeting, but she feels if American Engineering was trusted to do the job, then what has been produced should be trusted and keep moving and make a decision. This will only delay even more. As we know, the numbers can change at any time. Vice Chair Pauley agrees and feels like Mr. Bingham



was hired for a reason. He produced the needed information to make a decision. Vice Chair Pauley just recently became a member of the Joint Water and learned that everything was geared toward the Broad River. He did not have a lot of information on the Center Creek location. Months ago, Mr. Bingham was instructed to give information on the Center Creek and now on the Broad River. Now, we do not like the information and want to get someone else to check behind him. He was directed to compare the two and give us the pros and cons. Commissioner Taylor agrees and added that there is still a fairly long road ahead as far as going to the EPAC Committee and the COG. The recommendation from the Technical Committee would only strengthen the path forward. Outside of spending more money, which no one wants to do, it would strengthen and make our case there stronger and would not delay it as this could be done concurrently. The value of this would be that it would strengthen our case going forward with the COG. Commissioner Arndt agreed, and when a project is so large, it is not a bad idea to have somebody else take a look at it. Commissioner Crager has been in this profession for almost two decades, and this is pretty common practice to trust but verify. There is a large fiduciary responsibility to get this right, and having an abbreviated third-party review would just make the case more solid. Commissioner Crager feels that when we get to the EPAC Committee and the other discharger negotiations, there will be additional eyes on these documents, and we will need as much ammunition as we can have at that time. Chairman McMeekin stated his concern is also the EPAC Committee. There will be potential opposition, and it will depend on who we will be going before at the EPAC Committee. There is a time line in place, and we must get moving. We also do not want to get down the road and run into problems.

**Commissioner Prioleau joined the meeting at 6:19 p.m.**

Vice Chair Pauley stated he agrees that we have one time to get this right. He inquired of the time frame and projected cost of a third-party opinion. Chairman McMeekin stated if we do this, it cannot stop the process. Everything must go forward, and as Commissioner Taylor stated, it can be done concurrently in order to bolster our case when we get to EPAC. For various reasons, there has been too much wasted time. Commissioner Crager stated the level of effort was touched on at the Committee Meeting. He would think around 120 hours would be sufficient from a qualified professional. He would suggest having someone not from this area and not connected to the subject at all. It would be abundantly clear that this is a blind review, and this would preclude any future work with the Joint System for a number of years. The key points that everyone is most interested in would be construction cost, life cycle cost and the viability of what is to be built. Commissioner Johnson inquired concerning advertising, and Commissioner Taylor stated professional services would not need to be handled in this way. Mrs. Weathers suggested

possibly having Commissioner Crager select the engineer and then have it be approved by Commissioner Johnson and Commissioner Taylor. Commissioner Taylor stated the more well prepared we can be for the EPAC Committee the better, which will keep us from getting slowed down at a later date. This is also reasonably common. The Town also has a SCIIP Grant, and the Town will probably be paring with another consulting engineer to also take a look. It is such a large project, and we need to be sure we get it right. With SCIIP grants, there is a maximum of two years for completion and no time for mistakes. Again, Chairman McMeekin stated this would be done concurrently in order to bolster the case with the EPAC. There will be a lot of hard obstacles to get over. Commissioner Johnson stated it was also said in the Technical Committee Meeting that with all of the ARPA funding, it will depend on finding an engineer and if that person will have time. Chairman McMeekin stated if one cannot be found, we move on. He does not want to get down to the end and be turned away by the EPAC Committee, and this is his biggest concern. Vice Chair Pauley inquired if there is a way to secure a date to have this done by, and if not, then we move on with what has been presented. Commissioner Taylor stated we move on without question like we are right now. Hopefully, when the next person comes in, they will validate everything Mr. Bingham has said. Mrs. Weathers stated it would be reasonable to set a timeline for looking for an engineer if one cannot be found. Commissioner Crager stated we are looking for either taking an off ramp or staying on the current path. He further stated there is a good length of time while the permitting process is proceeding before anything gets built. Chairman McMeekin agreed that no shovel of dirt will be turned until everything is confirmed. This would not be something to slow down or prevent but something to bolster when we get to EPAC. Commissioner Taylor stated not only EPAC, but there are 13 other agencies that discharge into the Broad, and our actions will drive their cost up. They will most likely challenge us in some way. Commissioner Johnson inquired the source of funding for this second engineer. Chairman McMeekin stated this will be another discussion, but he would be willing to take to the Town Council for the Town and the County to do 50/50 on this instead of 25/75. He does not feel it is fair for the County to pick up 75% of this item. Commissioner Johnson likewise would have to take this request to Council before going forward. Discussion ensued concerning how to proceed. Vice Chair Pauley stated in the interest of fairness, he feels it should be tabled. Commissioner Crager stated he would value this report somewhere between \$25,000 to \$50,000. At this point, Commissioner Crager rescinded the motion from the Technical Committee to give everyone time to discuss with their respective Councils.

## **8. DISCUSSIONS OF HIRING NEEDS**

Chairman McMeekin stated this will be staff for the Joint System. A new plant is being started from scratch, and we need to have someone. Commissioner



Johnson inquired if someone is needed part-time or temporary as needed. Chairman McMeekin stated there are a lot of deadlines coming up, and no one on the Joint System has that kind of time to devote. He feels this could be part-time to full-time. Commissioner Taylor stated Mr. Rhodes always says we need someone waking up in the morning with their mind focused on getting these projects done. With the deadlines, someone is needed who can be absolutely focused on this. Mr. Rhodes is also serving as a lot of the Joint System's staff, whether it is clerical or administrative along with legal. He is expensive to be doing clerical and other type work. This can be done more efficiently with having someone dedicated to these projects. Commissioner Pauley inquired if this person would be employed by the Joint System, where would they work from, would every member of the Commission be their boss, etc. Chairman McMeekin stated the normal hiring process will be followed and then a selection will be made. Commissioner Johnson inquired if more administrative would be needed or possibly accounting. Commissioner Taylor stated all of these along with somewhat of a technical background to understand what is going on. First, he would believe the budget would need to be amended. As time goes by, this person could also get into developing customers for the Joint System to make it more self-sufficient. They would answer to the Board and work with Commissioner Taylor and Commissioner Johnson on a day-to-day basis. Chairman McMeekin stated he believes Mr. Rhodes has already been thinking along these lines, and there may be people out there who may be retired that could be fished for. If we were fortunate, someone like this could be found, because we are not in the business of training anyone. If they are knowledgeable from the technical standpoint, dependable and has the required skills, they could start part-time and then possibly evolve into full-time. Mrs. Weathers stated this discussion is very good, and a job description could be brought forth at the July meeting for the Commission to take formal action. It appears that the Commission is thinking more of an employee than a consultant. Commissioner Johnson believes an employee will be cheaper than a consultant. Commissioner Taylor stated an employee would be dedicated as opposed to a consultant who will have a number of different clients. The Joint System needs someone to focus and make sure all deadlines are met on SCIIP and other things. They will need to have a very strong relationship with the County's economic development efforts and the Town's utility efforts. Chairman McMeekin stated this gives a good framework as to how to proceed on this. As everyone knows, there are serious deadlines ahead. There are probably some people in the State who will not meet their deadlines, which could cause their funding to be clawed back. We do not want this to happen to us. Commissioner Johnson and Commissioner Taylor will get together to come up with the requirements.

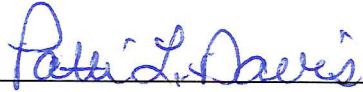
**9. EXECUTIVE SESSION: (The following statement is provided in compliance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act:**

**Subsequent to Executive Session, the Commission may take action on matters discussed in Executive Session.)**

No executive session needed.

**10. ADJOURN**

At 6:49 p.m., it was moved by Vice Chair Pauley, seconded by Commissioner Crager, to adjourn. ***The motion carried unanimously 7-0.***



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PATTI L. DAVIS  
SECRETARY



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JOHN MCMEEKIN  
CHAIRMAN