



# GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes  
Committee of the Whole  
May 21, 2019  
4:09 p.m.

County Square – Council Chambers  
301 University Ridge  
Greenville, South Carolina 29601

#### **Council Members**

Mr. Butch Kirven, Chairman  
Mr. Willis Meadows, Vice Chairman  
Mrs. Xanthene Norris, Chairman Pro Tem  
Mr. Joe Dill  
Mr. Mike Barnes  
Mr. Sid Cates  
Mr. Rick Roberts  
Mr. Bob Taylor  
Mrs. Liz Seman  
Mr. Ennis Fant, Sr.  
Mr. Lynn Ballard  
Mr. Dan Tripp

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Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place and agenda was posted on the bulletin board at the County Square and made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned Citizens.

#### **Council Members Absent**

None

#### **Staff Present**

**Joe Kernell**, *County Administrator*  
**Mark Tollison**, *County Attorney*  
**Kim Wunder**, *Assistant County Attorney*  
**John Hansley**, *Deputy County Administrator*  
**Regina McCaskill**, *Clerk to Council*  
**Jessica Stone**, *Deputy Clerk to Council*  
**Paula Gucker**, *Assistant County Administrator, Public Works*

**Shannon Herman**, *Assistant County Administrator*  
**Nicole Wood**, *Assistant to the County Administrator*  
**Bob Mihalic**, *Governmental Relations Officer*  
**Ruth Parris**, *Management and Budget*  
**Deneise Branyon**, *Management and Budget*  
**Lisa Shealey**, *Management and Budget*  
**Maria Tooley**, *Management and Budget*

#### **Others Present**

None

#### **Call to Order**

Chairman Kirven

#### **Invocation**

Councilor Liz Seman

**Item (3) Approval of Minutes**

**Action:** Councilor Norris moved to approve the minutes of the April 2, 2019, Regular Committee of the Whole Meeting and the April 10, 2019, Special Called Meeting

Motion carried unanimously.

**Item (4) Greenville County Biennial Budget Recommendation**

Presented by: Joe Kernell  
County Administrator

Mr. Kernell stated the proposed 2020 – 2021 biennial budget addressed as many of the needs and processes within the County as possible. The County was somewhat limited based on resources; however, Mr. Kernell stated he felt the proposed budget stretched the available resources as far as possible.

Mr. Kernell stated the budget proposal met Council’s suggested priorities as outlined during the retreat held in April. While Council had not formally adopted the priorities, they have been incorporated in the proposal. Mr. Kernell stated public safety was the top priority followed by infrastructure, fiscal stewardship, public transit, economic development and planning.

The major emphasis of the budget was to maintain the County’s average fund balance of \$48 million; the amount was estimated to be \$53 million at the end of FY 2020 and \$46 million at the end of FY 2021. Mr. Kernell stated the fiscal financial policies in place required 25 – 35% of the County’s revenue to be set aside for fund balance which translated to \$42 million for FY 2020 and \$44 million for FY 2021.

The budget reflected the proposed priorities of Council with emphasis on law enforcement and public safety as well as funding for affordable housing and increased funding for public transportation. In addition, the budget provided for cost of living increases for County employees and implementation of the classification and compensation plan review currently in progress.

A number of man hours were spent preparing the budget to include analyzing data and studying the past in order to predict the County’s future financial situation. Services were inventoried and all department budgets were reviewed to reduce unnecessary expenses and realign resources where they were most needed. Mr. Kernell stated all funds were evaluated, not just the General Fund, where 90% of the County’s operations occurred.

Mr. Kernell stated revenue was not controllable for the most part. Revenue slowed down a few years ago and the County was hit very hard on a number of revenue line items. Property taxes slowed and building did not occur which resulted in a number of shortages across the board. Mr. Kernell stated while revenue could not be controlled, the County’s expenditures could. Measures have been taken in the past to lower expenditures, as needed, and the budget was constantly scrutinized.

The proposed budget for the next two years amounted to \$302.8 million for FY 2020 and \$304.3 million for FY 2021, for a total of \$607.1 million. Mr. Kernell stated the General Fund contained the bulk of the funds followed by Debt Service, Enterprise Funds and Special Revenues, which

were required by accounting law to segregate and have the monies set aside in different operations. The budget increase from FY 2019 to FY 2020 was 6.23% and the increase from FY 2020 to FY 2021 was .51%, less than 1%.

Highlights of the proposed budget included a significant focus on public safety and law enforcement; major infrastructure investment; an intentional focus on maintaining a sound fiscal condition; \$1 million per year to address affordable housing and \$4.5 million over two years directed toward public transportation.

Mr. Kernell stated the budget was heavily focused on public safety. Sheriff Brown requested 20 additional Deputy positions over the next two years and the budget allowed for 28. The Detention Center requested 24 additional detention officers which coincided with the budget recommendations. EMS requested an additional 24 field positions and 28 have been recommended in the budget. Mr. Kernell stated the numbers may not be spread out over a two year period but would be implemented as needed. While deputies and EMS workers were “on the scene” and visible to the public, the “behind the scenes” workers were just as important. He stated there was a need for additional Communication Specialists and the budget recommended an additional four over the next two years. Due to increased crime, there now existed a need for additional coroners; the budget allowed for two each year. Mr. Kernell stated a new law would require Law Enforcement ten days to submit “rape kits” and other evidence. Currently, Greenville County handled most of its evidence analysis; the budget provided for additional Forensic Technicians. Staff increases in the Solicitor’s Office and Probate Court were recommended in the budget. Mr. Kernell stated while the requests were extensive he felt the positions were highly needed. The County was struggling to fill positions as the economy was very good at this time, and salaries had to be addressed in order to fill positions.

Infrastructure improvements included neighborhood drainage, water quality retro-fit projects and storm water flood projects. Mr. Kernell stated the Road Program had been increased to \$12 million per year with a hope there would be some matching with C-Funds and other sources in order to maintain County roads.

Mr. Kernell stated the proposed budget maintained adequate reserves to meet the standards to retain the County’s AAA bond rating; Greenville County was one of approximately 24 counties across the country with the AAA rating from all three rating agencies. Mr. Kernell stated the rating was not easy to attain and certainly not easy to retain. A 2.5% salary adjustment for each year of the budget was proposed as well as \$2 million for the compensation and classification study. Mr. Kernell stated the County was experiencing problems with “starting pay” for deputies, detention officers and EMS; there was a need to raise starting salaries for those positions. Funds were also available for the compensation and classification study which would give information regarding parity and compaction issues as well as market studies across the board.

Mr. Kernell stated public safety salaries were the main focus of the budget; the County was competing with other local agencies with regards to salaries. He stated it was hard to attract and retain public safety staff with the current salary scale.

Approximately 10 – 15 ambulances would be replaced over the next two years, according to Mr. Kernell, which was a very expensive proposition. Mr. Kernell stated many of the law enforcement vehicles had high mileage and needed to be replaced to ensure safe work environments for the deputies.

Mr. Kernell stated the County received a large number of grants each year; \$200,000 had been included in the proposed budget for grant match money. He added that \$72 million was allotted for capital improvements and economic development for FY 2020 and \$74 million for FY 2021; \$2.2 million for FY 2020 and \$850,000 for FY 2021 for Parks, Recreation and Tourism capital projects. Mr. Kernell stated those amounts were outside of the monies already budgeted for the Swamp Rabbit Trail Extension through the City of Greenville. Funding for economic development included \$462,000 for Upstate Alliance and \$3.05 million over two years for GADC.

Mr. Kernell stated Greenville County was the largest county in the state with one of the lowest per capita number of employees. Given those numbers, the County was always looking for ways to improve service delivery while avoiding the need to hire additional employees. The proposed budget provided enhancements to the County's operating system, GIS projects and imaging for both the Register of Deeds and Probate Court.

Facility construction and improvement projects included, but were not limited to, the LEC ramp, HVAC controls at the LEC and HVAC units for Animal Care. Mr. Kernell stated a proposed upgrade to the Sheriff's Office Training Center was included at a cost of \$3 million which would require borrowing of the money. The training center, located on a piece of seized "drug property", had reached its "end of life" and was no longer adequate. Mr. Kernell added the County was able to save a considerable amount of money by having its own training center. Some of the County's EMS equipment was also coming to "end of life" and in need of replacement.

Some of the County's parks were slated to be upgraded, in particular the Pavilion. Road improvements were also included in the budget as part of the Road Program.

Mr. Kernell stated there had been quite a bit of discussion in the past about the County Square Redevelopment Project. He added \$60 million had been budgeted for each year of the budget for a total of \$120 million which was carried forth from the prior year's budget. The County would focus on the County's office building; the rest of the development would be handled by Roca Point Georgetown Company. The overall development was the "big picture" and so important for the County's financial future. Mr. Kernell stated that Council had requested research on ideas to ensure the County was diverse and inclusionary in the building project; he hoped to bring the results to Council in the near future.

For the General Fund Resources, 56% of budget revenues were derived from property taxes, approximately 13% from intergovernmental or state revenues, approximately 20% from County offices revenue and the remaining 11% from miscellaneous sources. Revenue projections for FY 2020 were \$171 million, \$180 million for FY 2021 and \$189 million for the following year.

General Fund Expenditure projections for FY 2020 were \$169 million, \$185 million for FY 2021 and \$193 million for the following year. Mr. Kernell stated the Fund Balance showed a slight decline but the County had managed to stay above the minimum as established by financial policies. The Fund Balance had been built up over the years and the County withdrew from it as needed; there was a surplus every year. Mr. Kernell stated that even if revenues came in less than projected, the County would keep expenditures below.

Mr. Kernell stated the buy-in budget was \$50 million which included solid waste stormwater management, health and dental fund, fleet management and worker's compensation.

Mr. Kernell stated first reading for the proposed budget was scheduled for later in the evening during the County Council meeting; second reading was scheduled for June 4. The budgets would then be “split”; third reading for the FY 2020 budget would be held on June 18 and July 16 for the FY 2021 budget.

Mr. Kernell summarized the proposed two-year budget as follows:

- Met the requirements to maintain the County’s AAA credit rating
- Addressed Council’s proposed priorities and goals
- Increased personnel substantially in the area of public safety
- Enhanced public funding for public transportation
- Addressed affordable housing
- Met current capital needs
- Tackled compensation and classification issues
- Did not require a property tax increase

Chairman Kirven stated budget workshops could certainly be scheduled which would give Council an opportunity to review the budget line-by-line, ask questions of staff and make any needed changes. Mr. Kirven stated no dates had been set for workshops as of yet and he was open to input from his colleagues for possible dates to meet.

Mr. Kirven stated as Greenville County grew and prospered, he felt sure that County Council wanted to include everyone in the ability to participate to the fullest extent in everything that Greenville County had to offer. He suggested Greenville County set the benchmark for local government entities in regards to inclusion of minority businesses; he would like to see the County set a goal of 20% minority participation rate in the University Ridge Development Project. Mr. Kirven added it was impossible to control Roca Point and its dealings with local businesses but he suggested asking them to participate in the spirit of inclusion and benefits to all the citizens of Greenville County.

Mr. Kernell thanked the Budget Team for all of their hard work.

Councilor Ballard asked when the pay disparity within the Sheriff’s Office would be addressed.

Mr. Kernell stated the compensation and classification study was due to be completed by September; he was hopeful some information would be available sooner. He added \$2 million over the next two years was available to address the situation immediately. Once the data was confirmed as to where the changes were needed, implementation would soon follow.

Councilor Ballard asked if the \$2 million was strictly for the Sheriff’s Office.

Mr. Kernell stated it was for all public safety areas; if the money was not sufficient, he would approach Council with additional options. He stated the starting pay for public safety personnel had been raised over a number of years; over the past 15 years it had increased by 50%. Mr. Kernell stated it still needed to be increased due to the economy.

Councilor Ballard stated he had been informed by a reporter that the amount for the Sheriff’s Office was \$2.8 million.

Mr. Kernell stated the information actually came from the Sheriff's Office and he had not verified the information as of yet. The rationale behind the number was unknown. He added that the \$2 million would go a long way in addressing the issues.

Councilor Ballard stated the amount designated for the Road Program was \$12 million and had been \$8 million in previous years.

Mr. Kernell stated the amounts for the Road Program fluctuated from time to time.

Councilor Ballard asked if the \$12 million took into account the increase in the road fee and would the monies be spread out among the County's 12 districts.

Mr. Kernell stated it did include the road fee and would be spread out among the districts. As part of the budget, re-evaluation of the County's roads would be completed in order to get a better picture of the road situation. The worst roads would be repaired first.

Councilor Ballard stated he heard the City of Greenville was getting a new police station and would be moving out of the LEC. He asked Mr. Kernell how that would affect the Sheriff's Office.

Mr. Kernell stated it would double the space, which was much needed.

Councilor Ballard asked if the State Funds included in the proposed budget were based on the amount the County would receive or the Local Government Fund.

Mr. Kernell stated it was based on what the County was supposed to receive based on the State budget.

Councilor Seman asked if Council needed to formally vote its proposed priorities in order to adopt them as formal priorities. She added as the County moved ahead in its budget process, she felt it would be best to make them actual priorities instead of keeping them proposed.

Chairman Kirven stated the priorities were a work in progress and Council would continue to refine them as needed.

Councilor Fant stated economic development and the lack of pad-ready sites was an issue for him. He asked Mr. Kernell to elaborate on steps the County would be prepared to take in the new budget in regards to infrastructure and pad-ready sites.

Mr. Kernell stated the funding proposed for economic development would be directed to GADC. It was his understanding that GADC had accumulated a significant fund balance over the years and he would recommend that funding be utilized for pad-ready sites. Mr. Kernell stated the County needed to be a bit nimble in its ability to respond if something became available, such as a tract of land.

Councilor Fant asked if the County would be in such a position to respond if a 300 acre tract of land became available and sewer needed to be available within a mile. He inquired if the County could fund the infrastructure need and then recoup its money when the property sold.

Mr. Kernell stated that would be something the County would have to look at very closely.

Mr. Kernell stated he wanted to clarify the funding for Greenlink. Currently, the County put in about \$500,000 per year for Greenlink; the proposed budget recommended \$2 million for FY 2020 and \$2.5 million for FY 2021. He added he spoke with Gary Shepard before he resigned from Greenlink and Mr. Shepard was very pleased with the proposed amounts. Greenlink originally asked for \$3.8 million the first year and \$5 million for the second year. The operating request for the first year, which included the existing service and the extended service, was \$1.15 million. The amount needed for the second year to maintain the existing and extended service was \$2.4. Greenlink asked for 100% funding for buses which would be \$2.65 million per year for the next two years for a total of \$5.3 million and did not include any offsets from potential grants. Mr. Kernell stated the proposed amounts given by Greenville County would provide the 20% match from the grants. If Greenlink did not receive the grants, the County would have to get together with the City of Greenville and Greenlink and explore ways to meet the need. He stated he could not see the County having the ability to put money there if it was not going to be needed. Mr. Kernell stated the proposed amounts funded Greenlink at 100% for operations as well as additional services at night and other needed improvements.

Councilor Tripp applauded Mr. Kernell and the Budget Team for their hard work. He added that the proposed budget was “spot on” in addressing Council’s priorities. Mr. Tripp asked if the Road Fund was primarily used for paving, intersection, widening or a mix.

Mr. Kernell stated that the money has been utilized mainly for paving in the past few years; there has not been money left over for other projects. If the County could maintain \$12 million per year for the Road Project, other improvements could be completed.

Councilor Tripp inquired about the total amount of Local Government Funds the County expected to receive.

Mr. Kernell stated the amount was \$17 million.

Councilor Tripp asked what increase the amount represented with the new legislation.

Chairman Kirven stated the new legislation had not passed as of yet.

Councilor Tripp asked if the budget addressed increased funding for the Internet Crimes Against Children Unit.

Mr. Kernell stated the additional funding could be used as needed; the Sheriff had a lot of latitude in determining what types of positions would be added.

Councilor Norris stated she did not see any monies set aside for facilities for areas such as City View. Ms. Norris stated there were no facilities for the youth in those areas and she was not satisfied with summer programs being held in the tents provided by Paul Guy.

Joe Kernell stated the County was specifically looking at opportunities in those areas but was currently behind in maintenance of its park facilities. The County was currently trying to put together a program to address maintenance issues and would possibly be issuing bonds in order to care of the situation. Once the maintenance issues were resolved, the County would be able to look at the expansion of its recreation facilities.



Councilor Cates inquired about money from the FTA for a new bus garage with matching local funds; it was his understanding that the City of Greenville had already given its share to Greenlink and he wanted to know if the County had done the same.

Mr. Kernell stated the County was in the process of working with Greenlink on the issue; there were some properties available which could possibly be donated and would provide the match needed.

Vice-Chairman Meadows inquired if any money was allocated in the budget for repairs needed on the Swamp Rabbit Trail.

Mr. Kernell stated the Swamp Rabbit Trail was the County's most widely used recreation facility and it needed to be kept "first class." Funds were set aside in the budget for trail maintenance; additional money from the sale of the River Street property was available for maintenance and expansion of the trail.

Councilor Dill asked when the 2.5% across the board salary increase would take effect.

Mr. Kernell stated the increase would take effect on July 1.

Councilor Dill stated he had heard that newly hired deputies were making more money than tenured deputies and asked if an adjustment would be made to rectify the situation prior to September when the study was scheduled to be completed.

Mr. Kernell stated a starting deputy would come in at the lowest pay level; there may be some adjustments for education and training which could account for some compaction. He stated the compensation plan study would provide the data necessary to make any needed adjustments in order to recruit and retain. Mr. Kernell stated that in the past, the County had been able to address salary issues for small groups of employees. There were currently 1200 – 1300 public safety employees. Any change could cause a "ripple effect" and that was why those positions were being studied. Mr. Kernell stated whenever the economy was good, it caused problems in recruiting and retaining employees as there were more opportunities to make more money.

Councilor Dill asked if it mattered who the Sheriff was in regards to salary adjustments.

Mr. Kernell stated it did not matter; the data collected by the compensation study would support the need adjustments.

Councilor Dill commended Mr. Kernell and his staff for doing such a great job on the budget; he looked forward to implementing it. Mr. Dill asked if there were any expectation tied to the money allocated for Greenlink. He added that he lived in an area where there was no bus service; many of his constituents wanted to work but were unable to do so due to lack of transportation.

Mr. Kernell stated Greenlink could certainly address Council and discuss areas where there was no bus service; availability was determined by distance, timing, ridership and cost.

Councilor Roberts also thanked staff for putting together the budget and added that he looked forward to upcoming budget workshops. Mr. Roberts inquired if Council would be able to see the specific budget requests from each department.



Mr. Kernell stated that information was included in the budget summary.

Councilor Roberts asked if Council could make adjustments to the budget during the workshops to counter competition from other agencies.

Mr. Kernell stated Council could make adjustments but it was better to have the data to support proposed changes. The County did not want to overpay and needed to be in alignment with the market. Mr. Kernell stated “knee jerk reactions” could set the rate too high and it was impossible to go back.

Councilor Roberts stated the new positions in the Detention Centers could not be filled at the current pay rate; it was \$2.00 lower than Spartanburg.

Mr. Kernell stated he was hopeful that some data from the study would be available sooner; public safety positions were the first priority of the study.

Councilor Roberts inquired how much it would cost to get all the roads in the County where they needed to be in terms of repairs, repaving, etc.

Mr. Kernell stated he could provide an estimated cost. Most of the county roads were in pretty good shape; the state roads were suffering. Funds were needed for widening projects as the County normally maintained repaving.

Councilor Dill asked if the Communications Fee fund balance was included in the budget summary.

Mr. Kernell stated the amount was included in the summary. The money was initially used for equipment and radios; a large amount of capital and \$600,000 per year to Motorola. Currently, the money was being used to pay the monthly charge for all fire, Sheriff and EMS.

**Action:** Councilor Dill moved to forward the proposed FY 2020 and FY 2021 budget to Council for first reading.

Motion carried unanimously.

**Item (5) County Square Redevelopment Project**

**Action:** Councilor Barnes moved to direct the County Administrator to terminate the agreements of the new County office building and the University Ridge Redevelopment Project as of May 22, 2019. He also moved to direct the County Administrator to take all necessary steps to cease work and stop the performance and procurement of all services in furtherance of the redevelopment of County Square as contemplated by the agreements. Mr. Barnes further moved to direct the County Administrator within 30 days to provide a full accounting to County Council of all amounts paid, and amounts due for services in furtherance of these projects up to and including the date of termination.

**Action:** Councilor Ballard moved to amend the motion to state, rather than terminate the project, to propose the County meet with the developers to investigate the possible relocation of the County Square Building as well as the corresponding State offices offsite.

Vice-Chairman Meadows requested a roll call vote.

Motion to amend failed with a roll call vote of six (Barnes, Meadows, Roberts, Norris, Fant and Ballard) in favor and six (Dill, Cates, Taylor, Seman, Kirven and Tripp) in opposition.

(The original motion was on the floor.)

**Action:** Councilor Seman called for the question.

Motion to call for the question carried.

Motion as presented failed with a roll call vote of four (Barnes, Meadows, Roberts and Norris) in favor and eight (Dill, Cates, Taylor, Seman Fant, Ballard, Kirven and Tripp) in opposition.

**Item (6) Adjournment**

**Action:** Councilor Dill moved to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously and the meeting was adjourned at 5:12 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

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Regina G. McCaskill  
Clerk to Council