



# GREENVILLE COUNTY COUNCIL

Minutes

Committee of the Whole Meeting

March 19, 2024

4:01 p.m.

Council Chambers  
301 University Ridge  
Greenville, South Carolina

**Council Members**

**Mr. Dan Tripp**, *Chairman, District 28*

**Mrs. Liz Seman**, *Vice-, District 24*

**Mr. Butch Kirven**, *Chairman Pro Tem, District 27*

**Mr. Joey Russo**, *District 17*

**Mr. Mike Barnes**, *District 18*

**Mr. Benton Blount**, *District 19*

**Mr. Stephen Shaw**, *District 20*

**Mr. Chris Harrison**, *District 21*

**Mr. Stan Tzouvelekas**, *District 22*

**Mr. Alan Mitchell**, *District 23*

**Mr. Ennis Fant, Sr.**, *District 25*

**Mr. Rick Bradley**, *District 26*

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Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, notice of the meeting date, time, place and agenda was posted online, at 301 University Ridge, Greenville, and made available to the newspapers, radio stations, television stations and concerned citizens.

**Council Members Absent**

None

**Council Members Remote Participation**

None

**Staff Present**

**Joe Kernell**, County Administrator

**Mark Tollison**, County Attorney

**Kim Wunder**, Assistant County Attorney

**Regina McCaskill**, Clerk to Council

**Pam Gilliam**, Administrative Assistant Clerk to Council

**Terrance Galloway**, Information Systems

**Keith Brockington**, GPATS

**Bob Mihalic**, Governmental Affairs Officer

**Nicole Wood**, Assistant County Administrator

**Tee Coker**, Assistant County Administrator

**Others Present**

None

**Call to Order**

Chairman Dan Tripp

**Invocation**

Councilor Benton Blount

**Item (3) Approval of Minutes**

- a. **March 4, 2024 – Special Called Committee Meeting**
- b. **March 5, 2024 – Regular Committee Meeting**

**Action:** Vice-Chairwoman Seman moved to approve the minutes of the March 4, 2024, Special Called Committee Meeting and the March 5, 2024, Regular Committee Meeting.

Motion carried unanimously.

**Item (4) Capital Projects Sales Tax Commission / Interviews and Appointment**

The following individuals appeared before the Committee of the Whole and gave their personal presentations.

- **Lynn Ballard** (D. 26)
- **Joseph Case** (via Zoom) (D. 18)
- **John Edwards** (D. 19)
- **Thomas Epting** (D. 22)
- **Joseph Farmer** (D. 22)
- **Frank Feher** (D. 17)
- **JaQuinda Jackson** (via Zoom) (D. 27)
- **Thomas Kester** (D. 24)
- **Ray Lattimore** (D. 28)
- **Terry Merritt** (D. 28)
- **Darlene Pace** (D. 25)
- **Charles Radford, Jr.** (D. 17)
- **Dennis Raines** (D. 28)
- **David Snodgrass** (via Zoom) (D. 18)
- **Lisa Stevens** (via Zoom) (D. 23)
- **William Webster IV** (D. 24)
- **Crissie Wood** (D. 18)

By ballot vote, Thomas Epting, Ray Lattimore and Lisa Stevens were elected to fill the three County appointed seats on the Capital Projects Sales Tax Commission.

**Item (5) Capital Projects Sales Tax Recommended Actions Resolution**

Chairman Tripp stated at the previous Committee of the Whole meeting, Council had discussed the concept of giving the Capital Projects Sales Tax Commission specific direction in order to narrow the focus on roads and bridges. There would be no latitude to move money around; if the referendum was approved, the County would only be able to work on the projects included on the referendum. Mr. Tripp stated that was the intent of the item in question.

**Action:** Mr. Tripp presented the Capital Projects Sales Tax Recommended Actions Resolution.

**Action:** Councilor Tzouvelekas moved to amend the resolution to state the funds could be used to only pave Greenville County roads.

Chairman Tripp asked Mr. Tzouvelekas if he meant no state or municipal roads would be included.

Councilor Tzouvelekas stated only Greenville County roads.

Councilor Harrison asked Mr. Tzouvelekas if he meant to only pave Greenville County roads.

Councilor Tzouvelekas stated he wanted to limit paving and improvement to only Greenville County roads.

Councilor Fant stated that would be asking all the taxpayers in Greenville County to contribute, but, those citizens living in municipalities were just “out of luck” in regards to getting municipal roads paved or improved.

Councilor Tzouvelekas stated he wanted to clarify his amendment. He stated he did not want to pave state roads; monies for those projects came from the State. Mr. Tzouvelekas stated he wanted to keep the paving limited to county roads and any municipalities located in Greenville County.

Vice-Chairwoman Seman stated a better phrasing would possibly be “priority on county and municipal roads.” She was concerned about county and municipal roads that led into state roads that also required some work. Ms. Seman stated she would hate to get a project halfway completed and not be able to finish it.

Councilor Tzouvelekas stated he planned to offer another amendment to indicate if a state road was paved, the County would ask for reimbursement from the State.

Chairman Tripp stated he was respectfully asking his colleagues to vote against Mr. Tzouvelekas’ amendment. The citizens of Greenville County did not necessarily know which roads were state roads, county roads or municipal roads. Mr. Tripp stated it sent the wrong message to those people living in the rural and unincorporated parts of the County where there were a lot of state secondary roads that were crumbling. He did not feel Council should make a distinction between the three types of roads.

Councilor Tzouvelekas stated there was a 12% tax on gas; those funds were only used for state roads. Mr. Tzouvelekas stated he respectfully disagreed with Chairman Tripp.

Chairman Tripp stated one calculus of the decision process was to get the State to pay for its roads. Mr. Tripp stated he would like for the County to work with SCDOT and try to get matching money; however, the County could not dictate that to the State. He suggested a partnership with SCDOT.

Chairman Pro Tem Kirven stated he did not want to complicate things unnecessarily, however, the County was pursuing the referendum under the applicable state laws. Mr. Kirven stated he not sure the County could implement Mr. Tzouvelekas’ proposed amendment of excluding state roads, if the voters approved the referendum.

Councilor Tzouvelekas stated the item in question was a resolution, not an ordinance. He stated his amendment would not mandate the State to do anything; it simply narrowed the scope.

Chairman Tripp stated the item in question was just a resolution to send a message to the commissioners. He stated Mr. Tzouvelekas had another amendment he wanted to introduce; there may be a way to address the issue of state roads with that amendment.

Motion to amend was denied by a roll call vote of two (Shaw and Tzouvelekas) in favor and ten (Russo, Barnes, Blount, Harrison, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Kirven and Tripp) in opposition.

Councilor Shaw stated he did not feel the whole process was a good idea; it was not fair and it was not smart. He wanted to add stormwater control to the resolution, along with additional parks and soccer fields. There were not enough parks or soccer fields in the County. Greenville County was failing in land use control.

**Action:** Councilor Shaw moved to add stormwater control and additional parks and soccer fields to the resolution.

Chairman Tripp stated the proposed resolution indicated ballot questions should focus on projects to improve roads and bridges as well as related infrastructure. Mr. Tripp stated paving the roads would put pressure on stormwater systems. There was a way to deal with stormwater issues as they were related to roads. Mr. Tripp stated the same could be said about sidewalks. If a road was widened or repaved and the sidewalk was torn up, repair of that sidewalk would be part of the project. He stated he was fine with the stormwater piece, as long as it was tied back into roads and bridges. The Capital Project Sales Tax allowed for a wide array of things. The message of the proposed resolution was that the County wanted to stay more narrowly focused than what was allowed. Mr. Tripp stated he did not agree with including parks; he loved parks but there was only a certain number of dollars to spend. It would cost \$2 billion to pave every road in Greenville County that was in poor or fair condition. The County would never get through the needed road improvements if parks, bike trails and large scale projects like sidewalks were added. Chairman Tripp respectfully asked his colleagues to vote against the amendment.

Councilor Bradley stated he would be against including any other elements in the resolution except roads and bridges.

Councilor Harrison stated he agreed that stormwater was an important piece. As a by-product of the overall goal was where those needs could be met.

Councilor Tzouvelekas stated there was a resolution on the evening's Council agenda indicating a \$1.5 million grant from ARPA to take care of stormwater issues. It appeared as if there were funds coming in for stormwater.

Chairman Pro Tem Kirven stated the ARPA grant was for a narrow scope project that would not cover the whole county.

Chairman Tripp stated stormwater was a major problem in Greenville County; there were a lot of other issues that needed to be addressed. The Capital Projects Sales Tax would not solve all the problems in the County, but, he felt there was a way to surgically deal with some of them.

Councilor Blount stated the proposed resolution could be interpreted to include stormwater.

Chairman Tripp confirmed that the resolution included related infrastructure.

Vice-Chairwoman Seman stated in regards to parks, she suggested as the County headed into its next budget season, parks should be a priority. She stated Greenville County had some success with grants and nonprofit donations, as it related to the extension of the Swamp Rabbit Trail. Ms. Seman stated the County should continue to find ways to leverage those dollars.

Motion to amend was denied by a roll call vote of one (Shaw) in favor and eleven (Russo, Barnes, Blount, Harrison, Tzouvelekas, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Kirven and Tripp) in opposition.

**Action:** Councilor Tzouvelekas moved to amend the resolution to indicate the State would reimburse the County if a state road was paved; if Council did not agree with that amendment, he moved to amend the resolution to indicate the County would only pave county roads for the first four years.

Chairman Tripp stated Mr. Tzouvelekas' amendment was actually two different topics. In regards to State reimbursement for the paving of state roads, the intent of the resolution was to give the commissioners some direction, not to set policy. He stated if Mr. Tzouvelekas wanted to set a policy matter, he would need to take discuss it with the commissioners and have them include it in the ballot language.

Vice-Chairwoman Seman suggested including language in the resolution in indicate Council wanted to put a priority on county and municipal roads.

Councilor Harrison suggested an independent resolution indicating if the referendum passed and any state roads were paved or improved, the County would seek reimbursement.

Chairman Tripp stated the independent resolution was a good idea. It could be structured like the one in which Council directed staff to work with the municipalities to get their list of preferred projects. With the independent resolution, Council could direct staff to work with SCDOT and look for ways to improve match funds and other reimbursement. The fact that the State could potentially bring some money to the table was compelling. He asked Mr. Tzouvelekas if he would be willing to withdraw that part of his amendment and work together on a resolution to get staff to look for those opportunities.

Councilor Tzouvelekas stated he was willing to withdraw that part of his amendment.

Chairman Tripp asked Mr. Tzouvelekas to restate the second part of his amendment.

**Action:** Councilor Tzouvelekas moved to amend so as to focus on county roads for the first four years and then move to state roads. He stated County Council represented the citizens of Greenville County; it did not represent the State. Council should be able to determine where money received from the taxpayers should be spent.

Councilor Harrison stated he agreed with Mr. Tzouvelekas. Typically, the state roads were the ones people drove on the most. He stated he felt the County would "end up with egg" on its face if Mr. Tzouvelekas' amendment passed. It would be embarrassing to have paving projects going and the citizens still having to drive on bad roads every day. Mr. Harrison stated he did not think the County should have to cover the state roads, but, it was probably the best way forward, given the situation. He stated the County should definitely ask for reimbursement. He loved the intent of Mr. Tzouvelekas' amendment, but, it would send the wrong comment if the state roads were not fixed.

Vice-Chairwoman Seman stated she was concerned about the importance of projects being completed quickly. There may be some potential projects that could bring state money to the table. If only county roads were paved during the first four years, the County could potentially lose match money and not make progress on certain projects.

Councilor Blount asked if there were any legal means by which the County could ask for reimbursement for paving state roads. Mr. Blount stated the State was supposed to pay for the work, but was not.

Mr. Tollison stated if the County took on a project and was the funding source, they could ask the State to reimburse. If the State did not reimburse, the project may not be completed.

Vice-Chairman Kirven stated Council started the conversation about the roads because the citizens of Greenville County were yelling at them to fix the roads. The condition of the roads and their capacity created “bottlenecks”, slowing traffic and causing other problems. Mr. Kirven stated the people just wanted the roads fixed; they did not care if they were city, county or state roads. He stated he felt the discussion was getting pretty far away from that original concept.

Councilor Fant stated he agreed with Mr. Kirven. A lot of the problem roads in Greenville County were state roads; they were bigger and more prevalent. Mr. Fant stated the citizens did not care who owned a road. They just wanted them fixed. Mr. Fant stated the roads needed to be fixed, in order of priority, irrespective of who had jurisdiction over them.

Chairman Tripp read Section 5 of the proposed resolution, as follows:

*Ensuring County residents have safe, reliable roads, bridges and related infrastructure, no matter where they may travel throughout the County, is the County Council’s number one priority and was the reason County Council established the CPST Commission.*

Mr. Tripp asked Council to focus on the resolution to direct staff to look for funding opportunities, rather than try to hamstring the process.

Councilor Barnes stated Council needed to get back to the main issue. Regardless of whether a road belonged to a municipality, the County or the State, he felt the worst roads should be paved first. Mr. Barnes stated the city and county roads did not compare to the interstates.

Councilor Bradley asked if a state road was paved, would it become the responsibility of the County, at that point.

Chairman Tripp stated paving a state road would not transfer ownership of the road to the County.

Motion to amend was denied by a roll call vote of three (Blount, Shaw, Tzouvelekas) in favor and nine (Russo, Barnes, Harrison, Mitchell, Seman, Fant, Bradley, Kirven, Tripp) opposed.

**Action:** Councilor Tzouvelekas moved to amend the resolution to indicate the funds could only be used for existing roads and not for any new roads.

**Action:** Vice-Chairwoman Seman called for the question.

With objection, the motion to call for the question carried.

Motion to amend was denied by a roll call vote of five (Blount, Shaw, Tzouvelekas, Mitchell, Bradley) in favor and seven (Russo, Barnes, Harrison, Seman, Fant, Kirven, Tripp) opposed.

**Action:** Councilor Shaw moved to amend the resolution to indicate that only Greenville County contractors build the roads or do the work. If there were none available, the County would develop its own road construction companies.

Motion to amend was denied.

Chairman Tripp stated there had been some concern that the sales tax would be approved and would never go away. The message of the resolution made clear that it was an eight year term, and would only be used on roads, bridges and related infrastructure.

Councilor Barnes stated some people had tried to “flip the numbers around” and say it was a 17.5% increase in taxes; he stated it was not.

Motion to adopt a resolution recommending actions to the Capital Projects Sales Tax Commission in support of roads, bridges, and related infrastructure projects on the ballot was approved as presented.

**Item (6)**      **Adjournment**

**Action:** Vice-Chairwoman Seman moved to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried unanimously and the meeting adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

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Regina G. McCaskill  
Clerk to Council