

MINUTES
UNION COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 8, 2024, AT 5:30 P.M.
GRAND JURY ROOM AT UNION COUNTY COURTHOUSE

Present: Chairman Phillip Russell, II, Councilman Danny Bright, Councilman John Glenn, Vice chairman David Sinclair, Councilwoman Annie Smith, Councilwoman Carolyn Rutherford, Councilman John Flood, County Attorney Jennifer Williams, and Clerk to Council Kindra Horne.

Notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda giving the date, time, and place of the meeting was posted on the bulletin board in the hall of the Union County Courthouse and on the bulletin board at the Union County Government Offices, a copy was mailed or emailed to the members of the Union County Council, the County Attorney, Daniel Prince at WBCU Radio Station, Graham Williams at the County News, as well as to elected officials and heads of various county departments and offices. A notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda were also posted on the County's website.

Chairman Russell opened the meeting at 5:30 PM. Councilman Danny Bright gave the invocation and Vice Chairman Sinclair led the Pledge of Allegiance. The Clerk performed the roll call with the following results:

- District 1 Danny Bright was present.
- District 2 John Glenn was present.
- District 3 David Sinclair was present.
- District 4 Annie Smith was present.
- District 5 Carolyn Rutherford was present.
- District 6 John Flood was present.

Chairman Russell requested approval of minutes for the September 10, 2024 council meeting. Chairman Russell asked if there were to be any changes and there were none. Vice chairman Sinclair made a motion to accept the minutes as written, Councilman Flood seconded. Chairman Russell called for a vote and the motion carried unanimously.

Chairman Russell present service awards to the following employees:

- Cleve Brannon (Public Works) – 20 years
- Wayne Burgess (Public Works) – 20 years
- Mark Pettit (Detention Center) – 5 years
- Elizabeth Dees (IT) – 5 years
- David Vinson (Sheriff's Office) – 20 years
- Shannon Deaton (Sheriff's Office) – 30 years
- Amy Gibson (Clerk of Court) – 10 years

Chairman Russell presented a recognition of service to Union County News employee Graham Williams. Mr. Williams has served as a reporter and provided media coverage for Union County Council meetings for 15 years. Chairman Russell announced that tonight would be his last meeting as a reporter for Union County News, as he would be retiring.

Chairman Russell called for any Board Appointments or Removals, there were none.

Chairman Russell moved to the next item on the agenda which was to consider appointing Taylor Atkinson to the South Carolina First Steps Board, as recommended by the Union County Carnegie Library Board. Chairman Russell stated that in the past year, Governor McMaster signed Act 81 into effect, which called for a member of library staff to be placed on the First Steps Board. Ms. Atkinson has expressed interest in serving and is supported by members of the Library Board. Chairman Russell stated that evidence of support is in writing and had been provided to council. Chairman Russell called for a motion to place Taylor Atkinson on the First Steps Board. Councilwoman Smith made a motion, Councilwoman Rutherford seconded. Chairman Russell asked for questions, there were none. He called for a vote, which carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was to consider approving the use of Hospitality funds in the amount of \$3,000 to cover overtime for Union County Sheriff's Office and EMS, during the week of the Union County Fair. Chairman Russell stated this was done last year to provide protection and safety to citizens that attend the fair. Funds would be used to ensure that there would be an EMS unit present, provide security, and augment support of the crosswalk on all days except Friday night at the football game. He stated that last year they spent less than \$2,000, and he does not expect it to cost more this year. Chairman Russell called for a motion to approve \$3,000 in Hospitality Funds to be used to cover overtime pay to provide for public safety at the Union County Fair. Councilman Flood made a motion, Councilman Bright seconded. Chairman Russell called for questions, there were none. He called for a vote, which carried unanimously.

The next item on the agenda was to consider how to compensate employees for the Inclement Weather Closure that was a result of storm damage sustained when Tropical Storm Helene hit the county. Chairman Russell stated government offices had to close on Friday September 27, Monday September 30, and Tuesday October 1. The offices had no power on Monday but was restored on Tuesday. However, internet and phone lines were still down resulting in the closure on Tuesday. Chairman Russell stated that the Governor has the ability to allow waiver of 5 days under Inclement Weather for State employees if he deems a State of Emergency. This was done so that employees who could not afford to miss work or did not have leave time would be compensated for days missed. Chairman Russell stated that there were non-essential employees who wanted to come to work Friday, however it was a safety issue and on Monday and Tuesday there was no way to perform services. He stated that this does not have anything to do with essential employees who worked throughout the storm, those who worked well over 8- and 12-hour shifts. Chairman Russell stated that he would be addressing efforts made by essential employees later in the meeting. He stated that payroll is due this week so a decision must be made on how to compensate the non-essential employees who missed work during the hurricane. Chairman Russell asked Council to consider forgiving the days as weather days just as the Governor would do, so that employees do not have to use sick, vacation, or leave without pay. Councilman Glenn made a motion to forgive the days, and Vice chairman Sinclair stated that because those days were already budgeted, and he would second the motion. Councilman Flood asked what the cost would be and if it would be FEMA reimbursable. Chairman Russell stated that he did not know the dollar value of what it would cost to forgive the days. He explained that the actual impact to the budget would not result in any increase above what was already budgeted to pay employees due to the fact that the days being forgiven were days that were already part of the budget. Councilman Glenn stated that employees

would just be getting their regular pay, like a snow day. Chairman Russell stated that was correct, however Union County does not have a Hazardous Weather policy. He stated that they are working to bring the policy to Council by the first of the year. Had business operated as usual, employees would have received the same pay. Vicechair Sinclair stated that regardless, they are budgeted pay. Chairman Russell agreed. He asked if there were any other questions, there were none. Chairman Russell called for to forgive three days of Inclement Weather leave for non-essential employees and pay as non-essential employees for their regularly scheduled work days. The vote carried unanimously.

Chairman Russell moved on to the next item which was for Council to consider approving Healthy U Behavioral Health Services 2024-2025 SC DAODAS Covid Relief Program Grant in the amount of \$11,976.83. Chairman Russell stated that Council asked that approval and information on grants be presented to Council, as written in the 2024-2025 Ordinance. This would be one of the first grants Council was presented since the Ordinance was written. Chairman Russell called for a motion to proceed. Councilman Flood requested that there be discussion. Chairman Russell stated that there needed to be a motion and second, before moving into discussion. Vice chairman Sinclair proposed the option to table the motion, Councilman Glenn made a motion to table and Councilman Bright seconded. Chairman Russell called for a vote, which carried unanimously and the item was tabled.

Chairman Russell recognized elected officials present, Treasurer Debbie Robertson and Sheriff Bailey. Treasurer stated that tax notices had been sent out in the mail yesterday. Sheriff Bailey thanked all who came out to help on Friday and over the weekend during the storm. He stated that in addition to the many hours his staff, EMD, and communications put in, they had help from people in Conway and SLED. The Explorers, JROTC, and members of the Sheriff's office prepared 100 boxes of food from Greg's Grocery on Thursday for citizens of Union County and those are still available for anyone without power or in need. The Sheriff's Office also took a box truck full of water, hygiene supplies, etc. to Hendersonville for citizens of Western North Carolina. Sheriff Bailey also informed Council that their 2nd annual Shop with a Cop event was coming up, this provides Christmas gifts to children who qualify for the program. To raise money to fund the event the Sheriff's Office is taking orders for Clemson and Carolina Challenge Coins. He provided council with a flyer about the fundraiser.

Chairman Russell moved on to the Supervisor's Report, council had been provided a copy of the report. He stated that beginning on Tuesday, before the storm, there were extensive meetings held among the emergency and safety departments to ensure that they were prepared for the storm. He stated that Union County experienced winds of 80mph on Friday leaving the entire County without power. Due to trees and debris, many of the main highways were not open; EMD, Public Works, Sheriff's Office, and other departments began working on primary routes through the County. He stated that he also wanted to thank the volunteers who came to help. A priority on Friday was to go to every home to make sure no one was trapped, that task carried over into Saturday. Multiple press releases were sent out regarding safety during and after the storm. By Saturday, roadways were being cleared, internet was beginning to be restored, and an ATM and a gas station were operating. Carlisle Fire Department created a charging station for cell phones. The hospital was able to run off of a generator, however they could not run their air conditioning unit. City Administrator Joe Nichols, informed Chairman Russell on Sunday night that the hospital would

be restored full power on Monday morning through efforts from Duke Power, Lockhart Power, and the City of Union Utility. This led to Wal-Mart and other business on the bypass to regain power. Chairman Russell stated that there will be adjustments to plans and procedures for future events taking into account the events of this storm, however overall, Union County had zero fatalities and regained functionality in most areas in a timely manner. He thanked volunteers, including the fire service, and essential employees. In Union County, not including Municipalities and other local government entities, it was determined that there is approximately \$162,670 in damages to date. With Municipalities included, the total cost of damage was around \$1.3 million on Friday at 5pm. Chairman Russell also stated that there were many citizens who needed generators to run CPAPs, Insulin pumps, defibrillator devices, and other medical equipment that required power. He stated that those are elements that needed to be added to the plan for future events. Councilman Flood stated that he believes Supervisor Russell, Lee Brannon who is Director of EMD, City Administrator Joe Nichols, the power companies, and the School District, need to assess and analyze what went well and what needs to be improved. He recommended that power stations to charge devices be put in place around the County, not just in the City. In addition, citizens may need a warm place to stay as we head into the winter season. Councilman Flood stated that he is sure Supervisor Russell will work on the Critical Incident Debrief after the County is functioning again at 100%. Chairman Russell stated that was the plan. Chairman Russell announced that there was a press release that went out today regarding debris and cleanup of the roads, notifying of a contract put out through SC DOT to clean up storm debris. Chairman Russell stated that citizens should bring all debris between the edge of the pavement and their property line. If possible, cut into 6–7-foot sections to make it easier for the equipment. In addition, Chairman Russell stated that the debris should be placed away from mailboxes and fire hydrants. Citizens should not put out any household trash. There is no set schedule for cleanup, however, crews will reach every road in the County over the course of 6-8 weeks.

Chairman Russell announced that there was a committee report. Planning and Development Committee Chairman, David Sinclair, stated that they had a meeting prior to the Council meeting tonight. The purpose of the meeting was to discuss and review the Land Use draft that was brought to Council by the Union County Planning Commission. Comments and questions by Committee members were recorded and will be sent to the Planning Commission for review. Once reviewed, the draft document will be presented back to the Planning and Development Committee. Chairman Sinclair stated that overall, they liked the document however, some committee members requested further review of certain items in the draft. The main concern is to ensure the document protects citizens of Union County and not developers that may come to the County. Chairman Sinclair stated that he was able to attend most of the meetings that the Planning Commission held and he thanked Kathy Jo Lancaster, Lewis Jeter III, and Commission members for their efforts over the years regarding the document.

Chairman Russell asked if there were any announcements from Council, there were none. Chairman Russell requested a motion to adjourn. Councilwoman Smith made a motion, Councilman Sinclair seconded. The vote was unanimous and the meeting adjourned at 6:01 P.M.

Phillip G. Russell, II, Chair, Union County Council

Kindra W. Horne, Clerk to Council