



**Town of Sullivan's Island, South Carolina
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Friday, April 17, 2026**

A Finance Committee Meeting of Town Council was held on the above date at 3:00 p.m., all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been satisfied.

Present were: Patrick M. O'Neil, Mayor
Melanie Burkhold, Councilmember
Jody Latham, Councilmember (Chair)
Ned Higgins, Councilmember
Carl Hubbard, Councilmember
Justin Novak, Mayor Pro-Tem
Laura Schroeder, Councilmember

A. Call to Order

B. Confirmation of FOIA Notice

Chair Latham called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. and stated the press and public had been notified in accordance with State Law. Staff members present were: Monty Anders, Jason Blanton, Rebecca Fanning, Greg Gress, Amanda Hawver, Town Administrator Joe Henderson, Matt Jensen, Police Chief Glenn Meadows, Fire Chief Anthony Stith, Bridget Welch, and Max Wurthmann. There were six (6) members of the public and no (0) members of the press in attendance.

C. New Business (Discussion and Action Items)

1. Approval of March 30, 2026, Finance Committee Meeting Minutes

Motion was made by Melanie Burkhold, seconded by Pat O'Neil, to approve the March 30, 2026 Finance Committee Meeting Minutes, passed unanimously.

2. Final FY2027 Budget Recommendations

Town Administrator Joe Henderson first reviewed the budget planning timeline, which begins around September for the next fiscal year, which begins on July 1 each year. They begin by having meetings with department heads, discussing needs and requests. Typically, by January Joe and Comptroller Jason Blanton have put together a preliminary proposed budget that is shared with department heads and identify priorities. In February, they have a meeting with the Finance Committee Chair and the Mayor to present the draft budget. They then have a meeting about the draft budget with those people and also bring in each department head individually, where they present their Capital Budget requests. The Operating and Capital Budgets are put together and then presented at the first Finance Committee meeting of the year, usually in March. By the end of March, the goal is to have the budget ready to be presented for First Reading at the April Regular Town Council meeting.

Mr. Henderson presented a spreadsheet that was emailed to Council prior to the meeting detailing specific items that were questioned or discussed in the previous two meetings for a final review. The first was budgeting for Police overtime and hiring County officers for additional traffic control during the busy season. Councilmember Schroeder supports hiring an additional full-time officer but that is not in the current budget, which was discussed in prior meetings by Police Chief Glenn Meadows.

The next item was in the Maintenance Department budget, under salaries and wages. It was adjusted to allow for current staff to take on more stormwater maintenance, as well as potentially hiring a new full-time employee (FTE).

The Recreation Department suggested removing the December fireworks show and redirecting that money to maintenance of Town facilities. Councilmember Burkhold stated the cost has gone up significantly. Chair Latham stated she supports keeping the December fireworks and has gotten positive feedback from residents about it.

There was discussion about increasing millage rate versus increasing taxes and how it affects the budget. Mayor O'Neil and Mr. Blanton gave a more detailed explanation as to how the millage rate is decided on, and also said that is something that cannot be determined until later in the year, when the property tax numbers come in from the County.

Next was the suggestion of matching the Island Club renovations up to \$100,000. Mr. Blanton reviewed the funding sources for this project and other Capital projects, which does not affect the Operating Budget.

Following were comments about updating software programs with Starlink Satellite and Datto Server Backup. Mr. Henderson was able to get some quotes lower than the original \$23,000 one from Verizon for Starlink but feels they may be misleading as those companies have not

evaluated the site. He said prices for the Datto Server install remain consistent across companies. There is a cheaper alternative, which is another cloud back-up system, rather than a physical, transportable server. This system was recommended by our IT server, VC3, as the most compatible with what we already have.

Next was the possibility of reducing the number of requested Police Department radios from twelve to eight, followed by the possibility of renting a backhoe rather than purchasing one for the Maintenance Department.

Another change was reducing the number of new Air-Paks for the Fire Department from 19 to 12. Mayor O'Neil supports getting the requested 19. Councilmember Burkhold requested the Department training on the two different brands of Air-Paks that are used by the Mount Pleasant and Isle of Palms departments.

Councilmember Burkhold requested adding in maintenance for Station 22 boardwalk repairs.

The next three suggestions were from Town residents and were as follows:

1. Increasing the budget for SC250 expenses by \$10,000-\$20,000 (Mike Walsh)
2. Increasing the budget for removing invasive species by \$20,000, totaling \$100,000 (Susan Middaugh)
3. Use the interest earned from the South Carolina Investment Pool to create a fund that would fund maintenance for historic Town properties like Battery Logan, Battery Thompson, etc.

Each item was then voted on to decide whether or not it would be included in the First Reading of the budget at the April 21 Regular Town Council Meeting. These votes do not finalize any part of the budget. Chief Meadows stated Motorola is having a sale on the radios requested (for \$9,000 less than what was presented) and they will honor the sale price if the request is passed when the budget is finalized.

- Additional law enforcement to assist with traffic control: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Maintenance salary and wages increase: 5 in favor, 2 opposed
- Remove the December fireworks show: 4 in favor, 3 opposed
- Island Club support: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Starlink Satellite: 5 in favor, 2 opposed
- Datto Server Backup: 6 in favor, 1 opposed
- 12 Police Motorola Radios: 7 in favor, 0 opposed

- Maintenance Backhoe (moving from Capital Budget to lease for FY2027): 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Fire Department Air Pack Replacements
 - Replace 19: 3 in favor
 - Replace 12: 4 in favor
- Station 22 boardwalk maintenance: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- SC250 expenses increase (\$10,000 to \$20,000): 5 in favor, 2 opposed
- Keep original budget of \$80,000 for invasive species removal project: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Use \$11,000 to install surveillance cameras to identify illegal activity in the maritime forest: 5 in favor, 2 opposed
- Increase the budget for the invasive species removal project by \$20,000: 2 in favor, 5 opposed

Chair Latham stated the proposal for establishing a budget for historical properties needs to be a Council action item and not included in the budget at this time.

- Osceola Stormwater improvements: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Station 32 beach access improvements: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Water quality testing: 5 in favor, 2 opposed
- Replacement vehicle for the Fire Department: 5 in favor, 2 opposed
- Air conditioner recovery unit for fleet maintenance: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Brake laith: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Nifty Lift: 1 in favor, 6 opposed
- Polaris UTV for the Police Department: 5 in favor, 2 opposed
- Two replacement vehicles for the Police Department: 5 in favor, 2 opposed
- New computer software for Police Department: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Scheduling software for Police Department: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Scheduling software for equipment maintenance in the Water & Sewer Department: 7 in favor, 0 opposed
- Lab equipment replacements for Water & Sewer Department: 7 in favor, 0 opposed

Motion was made by Pat O'Neil, seconded by Laura Schroeder, to consolidate the individual votes taken on these items and pass the resulting budget to Town Council for a vote on Tuesday evening, the budget showing it being in balance, passed unanimously.

- D. Old Business (Staff update available)**
- E. Pending Items (Discussion / Action not required)**
- F. Public Comment**

- Barbara Spell, Town resident– stated we spend more than other comparable cities and the budget does not represent the interest of the taxpayers.
- Trey Sedalik, Town resident – thanks Council for their support of the Island Club and asks for their continued support.

G. Adjourn

Motion was made by Laura Schroeder, seconded by Melanie Burkhold, to adjourn the meeting at 5:08 p.m., passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,



Bridget Welch