Town of Sullivan's Island, South Carolina
Finance Committee
Meeting Minutes
Wednesday, March 11, 2026

A Finance Committee Meeting of Town Council was held on the above date at 10:00 a.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)
Carl Hubbard, Councilmember
Justin Novak, Mayor Pro-Tem
Laura Schroeder, Councilmember

Councilmember Ned Higgens previously notified Council he would not be available for this meeting.

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 was six (6) members of the public and no (0) members of the press in attendance.

Correspondence:

- Mike Walsh, SC250 Celebration – request to consider adding $10,000 - $20,000 to the SC250 budget for FY2027
- Scott Millimet – request for the establishment of a historical investment fund and a review of financial data
- Susan Middaugh – request budget line item of $100,000 for Chinese Tallow tree removal

C. New Business (Discussion and Action Items)

1. Review Proposed Water and Sewer Budget FY2027

Chair Latham reviewed the purpose and intent of developing the FY2027 capital budget as well as what it covers, who is involved with developing it, and other items to expect. Town Administrator Joe Henderson reviewed the correspondence received.

Greg Gress began reviewing the Water and Sewer FY2027 budget draft providing visuals and highlighted the main increases, as well as provided details for requests. Capital item requests for the year include replacement of lab equipment and replacement of software for a maintenance management system, totaling $23,000. He stated the money will come out of reserves. Mr. Gress then took questions from the Committee.

2. Review Proposed Capital Budget FY2027

Joe Henderson reviewed the requests for the Administration budget, beginning with two projects for operational resiliency. The first is a request for a Starlink satellite connection to Town Hall to maintain communication in the event of a catastrophic event. It would be a government secure hard connection and cost approximately $23,000-$30,000. The second is a request for a Datto server back-up, costing $50,000. This would provide a cloud-based server back-up to our current back-up in the event of data corruption or a catastrophic event. This was recommended by the Town's IT management company, VC3 and is also compatible with government operations. The $50,000 includes a recurring monthly cost.

A third request is for funds to re-open access at the Station 32 beach path, which is currently closed due to erosion. There are two options to do this; the first is to re-establish the path as it was at a cost of approximately $2,000, using town resources, or possibly a contractor. The second is to build a wooden walkover if the first plan does not work, at a cost of ~$50,000.

The Recreation department requests funding for Stith Park drainage improvements for $1.1M for the construction phase of the project. The engineering phase is complete and bids for contractors will be put out soon.

A stormwater improvement project that has been planned for several years. This is to repair a failed drainage system in the neighborhoods from Station 9.5 to Station 11. This includes rock revetment around the pump station along with reestablishing the check-valve and the re-digging the drainage ditch to help with localized stormwaters and flooding to exit. This project has an estimated cost of $252,890.00 and is currently being bid out.

Police Chief Glenn Meadows presented six capital project requests, listed in order of priority. Detailed descriptions of these requests and how they align with the Town's Comprehensive Plan are available to view on the Town's website by going to the "Town Finances" page and clicking into the "Financial Transparency Page" powered by ClearGov. This page also has links for all of the FY2026 capital projects. The first project request from the Police is a records management system that will cost ~$44,310. The current system is expiring in 2027 and currently holds all data related to the department. Chief Meadows considers this a critical need, and the department has selected CivicEye as their first choice. The cost also includes the migration of all current data into the new system. Over the next five years, the initial cost will be $44,310 and will cost $15,000 every successive year with a total cost of $105,000.

The second project request is also considered critical and is for a technology upgrade in police vehicles and desktops to provide consistency across all equipment. All the current equipment like laptops, desktops, and tablets are over five years old and some are out of warranty and no longer compliant with NCIC or CJIS. The total cost is $124,300, including docking stations, and will reduce time needed in the office, allowing them to stay in the field. It was confirmed this is a one-time cost and the equipment has a five-year warranty.

Next was a request for two new F150 pick-up trucks, which would replace two current explorers, not add to the fleet. This will continue the ongoing fleet modernization that started this year and will be an overall improvement to the current vehicles. They will cost $206,751 and include a full upfit package. The fourth request is also a vehicle replacement, with a new Polaris Ranger replacing one of the Kubota UTVs. The Ranger is climate controlled, has room for six passengers, and will cost $47,300. These are dual use for use by both police and beach service officers (BSOs) on beaches, streets, and trails. This is also a one-for-one replacement, and the old Kubota will be repurposed for use by the Town.

The fifth request is for replacement of the portable radios. They currently have 17 that are over ten years old and would like to replace 12 of them at a cost of $123,100. The remaining five can be repurposed for use by Town staff or be sold.

The sixth request is Vector Solutions scheduling software that would replace the current excel spreadsheet system. This would streamline with the current BS&A software and would be $13,500 over a five-year period. Total cost of requests from the Police Department is $619,951.

Fire Chief and Maintenance Department Director Anthony Stith made four requests between the two departments. The first for Maintenance is a lift for $101,000 that includes a trailer for transport. The department currently spends around $14,000 renting lifts for various projects each year. The second is a backhoe for $165,000 to help with stormwater projects and other various tasks. They currently share a 2018 backhoe with the Water & Sewer department, but the departments sometimes need them at the same time. Total requests for the Maintenance Department is $266,000.

The Fire Department is requesting a replacement vehicle for the Assistant Chief, a 2027 Expedition costing $95,000, which includes an upfit and would be a one-to-one replacement. The final, and what he feels is most necessary, is the department's Airpack system. The current system was purchased in 2014 and are no longer being made, making repairs and replacements difficult and time-consuming. The non-discounted quote for the replacement of 19 air packs with Scott Safety Air-packs is $244,862.34. These are compatible with neighboring departments, allowing for easier repairs, and have around a twenty-year lifespan. Total for the Fire Department is $339,862.34.

For the Resilience Department, Director Rebecca Fanning had two requests: one for preservation projects and the other for water quality reporting. The preservation projects include invasive plant removal across the Island and enforcement of the zoning ordinances, and the total cost is $80,800. Water quality testing and reporting is to continue at Station 28 pond and costs $35,200.

Matt Jensen presented Fleet Maintenance requests a brake lathe costing $17,631 and has a life expectancy of over ten years. A second request is for AC recovery machine, costing $9,587 and also has a lifespan of over ten years. He provided details on how these initial purchases will save money in the long run.

Mr. Henderson gave an overview of the process for determining Capital Budget project requests, which begins the year prior and goes through an internal vetting system before being presented to the Committee as a whole. He then took questions from the Committee. He clarified the difference between Capital Budget projects and the General Fund Operating Budget for each department.

The Committee then asked questions about the individual requests presented and Mr. Henderson provided a few more details on each.

The Committee then reviewed and asked questions about Stormwater projects, both ongoing and future. Mr. Henderson stated for the proposed Stormwater Outfall Project at Osceola, the funding will come from either bond proceeds or the Charleston County Stormwater Funds received, which was around $657,000. Money spent for the SCIIP grant project will be reimbursed by the Rural Infrastructure Authority, which is federal funding. There are also a few projects currently under review by FEMA, including the HMGP 4241 grant for the Lighthouse and the Station 22 ½ project. Money for those projects are not in the FY2027 because it has not been determined when we will receive it.

Police Chief Meadows then took questions regarding his project requests. He stated they currently have 12 vehicles in the fleet, with two spares, and that does not include the Kubota's. Mr. Blanton explained that prior to COVID, they had been on a cycle of replacing 2-3 vehicles per year, but then the supply dried up and they had to wait and purchase eight vehicles at one time. They are now trying to get back into the original cycle of replacing 2-3 each year.

Mr. Novak stated he would like to add a physical line item for Town Facilities. Last year, they provided matching funds for physical improvements at the Island Club, and he would like to match at least $50,000, possibly $100,000 again this year.

Chief Meadows answered questions about staffing concerns, stating he has developed a comprehensive staffing plan he hopes to implement in FY2028. This will be shared with Council at a later date. Personnel budget items will be discussed at the next meeting, as they are not part of the Capital Budget.

3. **Review Proposed General Fund Operating Budget FY2027**

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

- Jerry Callahan, 1657 Middle St – suggested starting the budget from scratch and focusing only on immediate needs, something called zero-based accounting. He has a lot of experience with budgeting and provided his contact information if anyone has questions.
- Barbara Spell, 1702 Atlantic Ave – would like the slides presented to be publicly available and had questions about Resilience and Fleet line items. She also stated concerns she has with the FOIA process.

G. Adjourn

Motion was made by Mayor O'Neil, seconded by Councilmember Schroeder, to adjourn the meeting at 12:00 p.m., passed unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Bridget Welch

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