



**Town of Sullivan's Island, South Carolina  
Town Council Meeting Minutes  
Tuesday, January 20, 2026, 6:00 p.m.**

The regular meeting of the Town Council was held on the above date at approximately 6:00 p.m., all requirements of the Freedom of Information Act having been satisfied.

Present were: Patrick O'Neil, Mayor  
Justin Novak, Mayor Pro-Tem  
Melanie Burkhold, Councilmember  
Ned Higgins, Councilmember  
Carl Hubbard, Councilmember  
Laura Schroeder, Councilmember

Councilmember Jody Latham previously notified Council she would not be available for this meeting.

Staff members present were Town Administrator Joe Henderson, Jason Blanton, Charles Drayton, Rebecca Fanning, Greg Gress, Fire Chief Anthony Stith, Assistant Fire Chief Amanda Hawver, Town Lawyer John Linton, Police Chief Glenn Meadows, Deputy Police Chief Monty Anders, Bridget Welch, and Max Wurthmann.

Mayor O'Neil called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and stated the press and public had been notified in accordance with State Law. There were fifty+ (50) members of the public present and no (0) members of the media present. Mayor O'Neil led the Pledge of Allegiance followed by a moment of silence or prayer in remembrance of deceased Islanders in 2025. He then read their names.

**I. Presentations:**

**1. Resolution of Appreciation for Councilmember Gary Visser**

The resolution was read aloud and presented to Mr. Visser by Mayor O'Neil.

**2. Palmetto Log Fort Project for SC250 celebration (Brett Bennett)**

President of the Charleston SC250, Brett Bennett presented information about the proposed construction of a partial Palmetto Log Fort replica. He gave his own background as well as the goals of SC250, and why they would like to see the replica built. SC250 events will begin this summer on Carolina Day (June 28) and extend to 2033. With the Battle of Sullivan's Island being a pivotal turn for the US in the Revolutionary War, a partial fort replica would be a great celebration of the Island's involvement. Fort Sumter National Park is unable to have the replica built on their property this year, due to ground disturbance worries, among other things. Mr.

Bennett highlighted some of the projects on Sullivan’s Island that have benefited from the \$13 million in grant money that SC250 has awarded.

The committee has heard a lot of positive feedback about the last time the replica fort was erected in 1976 and is eager to have another one for this generation. The idea is to have it built at the correct scale, with the correct dimensions and materials, etc., and he provided a visual of the project. Because a site has not been determined, it is difficult to have a budget proposal or a full design concept. Mr. Bennett’s presentation this evening was rendered with the idea of having it built at the top of the mound, Battery Capron, and having it up for 16 months. He presented a few different options with different site plans and layouts.

The project will be funded mostly by SC250 with the Town covering some costs for infrastructure improvements. Once the location is decided, he will be able to provide an estimate for those costs. The SC250 would be responsible for the construction, maintenance, and deconstruction of the structure and the logs will be provided by Dominion Energy. Mr. Bennett does not foresee the fort attracting any more visitors than what is typical for summertime visits to the Island. He also proposed using sand that was recently dredged from Breach Inlet. The project proposal has been featured in a few newspaper articles and was discussed publicly at three Public Facilities meetings prior to tonight. The Committee has general liability insurance in place for the structures and events planned over the next few years and will work with the Town to make sure the replica has the proper coverage needed, but he does not feel it would be anything out of the ordinary. He concluded by reiterating the importance of Sullivan’s Island’s role in the Revolutionary War and his feeling that South Carolina is very lucky to be part of the original 13 colonies and has a responsibility to use its resources wisely.

Public Facilities Committee Chair Carl Hubbard reviewed the various location options that have been discussed around the Island and why they are or are not a viable spot. Because of the negative commentary around Battery Gadsden as a proposed location, Mr. Hubbard and Town Administrator Joe Henderson have explored constructing it on top of the mound, Battery Capron, and Mr. Henderson has ordered seismic testing for viability. Mr. Bennett then took questions from Council and the audience.

### 3. Island Club SC250 concert performances (Carol Antman)

The Island Club would like to have two concerts on June 20, 2026, as part of the SC250 celebrations. The concerts have been approved, and The Island Club received a \$20,000 grant from the SC250 Commission and is requesting the Town to match \$3,000. The concerts will be free and open to the public. It will feature three different groups representing those that were left at home during the War, and their varied cultures. The concerts will be held at Sunrise Presbyterian Church, which can hold up to 400 people They are hoping to draw residents as well as non-residents from all over.

## II. Format: Public Comments

- Tom Proctor, 1726 Atlantic Ave – supports the Palmetto Log Fort project.
- Ralph Byers, 3025 Middle St – requested a public report of the progress made on the stormwater improvements project at Middle St and Station 28.
- Hal Coste, 322 Station 19 – spoke about the nomenclature of Cove Creek and provided some historical context for the area. It has not traditionally been called Cove Creek and he would like that to be recognized.
- Ryan Blair, 1918 P’On Ave – opposed the Palmetto Log Fort project.

- Cheryl Clarke, 2119 Pettigrew St – thanked the Fire and Police Departments for their participation in the MUSC Childrens Hospital “Good Night Lights” project in which first responders gather in front of the hospital and turn on all their vehicle lights to cheer the children who are hospitalized there.
- Tim Harrell, 1601 Middle St – suggested constructing the Palmetto Log Fort at Breach Inlet.
- Michael Scruggs, 2908 Marshall Blvd – supports the Palmetto Log Fort project.

### III. Council Action Items:

#### A. Approval of Minutes:

- December 16, 2025 Regular Council Meeting Minutes

**Motion was made by Councilmember Schroeder, seconded by Councilmember Higgins, to approve the December 16, 2025 Regular Council Meeting Minutes, passed unanimously.**

#### B. Resolution – Safety Resolution

The Resolution is to provide continuity and clarity about the commitment of Town leadership on safety policies and practices. Mr. Henderson stated this is part of the Town’s annual self-risk assessment for the workers’ compensation insurer, which will help improve the rate the Town receives.

**Motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Novak, seconded by Councilmember Hubbard, to approve the Safety Resolution for Risk Assessment for Comprehensive Insurance, passed unanimously.**

Councilmember Schroeder asked if this would affect the Town’s day-to-day operations; Town Administrator Joe Henderson confirmed it does not and is to confirm Council’s support of staff’s self-risk assessment practices.

#### C. Consideration of the SC250 Welcome Sign and Banners suggestions

Mr. Henderson reviewed the three SC250 signs being considered in this agenda item: a new welcome sign at Breach Inlet, adding a tagline over the existing welcome sign on the causeway, and installing banners on power poles throughout the Town. He then took questions from Council. SCDOT has approved permits for a sign at Breach Inlet and the cost of installation would be around \$10,000. Installation would be paid from the SC250 funds allotted in the Capital Budget.

**Motion was made by Councilmember Higgins, seconded by Councilmember Burkhold, to not have a sign at Breach Inlet, passed 5-1, with Mayor O’Neil opposing.**

Councilmember Hubbard confirmed if not used, the money for this sign would return to the SC250 budget.

**Motion was made by Councilmember Schroeder, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Novak, to instruct Town staff to come back to the February meeting with more specifics regarding banner signs, passed unanimously.**

Public Facilities Chair Hubbard stated the Committee recommended the taglines “History Lives Here” and “History Lives Here Since 1776,” which were sourced from resident input and discussed at the last meeting.

**Motion was made by Councilmember Burkhold, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Novak, to have the tagline “Battle of Sullivan’s Island 1776,” passed 5-1, with Councilmember Higgins opposing.**

Mayor O’Neil confirmed with Mike Walsh that “Battle of Sullivan’s Island” is the correct name.

- D. Consideration of possible location on Town property of a model of the original Palmetto Log Fort sponsored by Charleston SC250.

**Motion was made by Councilmember Schroeder, seconded by Mayor Pro-Tem Novak, it be brought back to the Public Facilities Committee so they can answer some of those questions and then come forward again to Council with more data, passed unanimously.**

Mr. Henderson stated they will provide the data requested to the Public Facilities Committee before the February Regular Council meeting.

- E. Consideration of a funding request from the Island Club of \$3,000 for a SC250 concert performance.

**Motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Novak, seconded by Councilmember Burkhold, to approve the funding request for \$3,000 for the SC250 concert performance described by Ms. Antman during the presentation process, passed unanimously.**

Mr. Henderson stated these funds would come from the SC250 budget.

#### **I. Reports and Communication:**

A. Mayor’s Report: nothing to report

B. January Correspondence:

- Tom Proctor, 1726 Atlantic Ave - Support for the Palmetto Fort project
- So Family, 2914 Jasper Blvd – Support for the Palmetto Fort project
- Bill & Pam Rayburn, 1721 Atlantic Ave - Support for the Palmetto Fort project
- Charles Stockdale, 1719 Atlantic Ave - Support for the Palmetto Fort project
- Mary Poole, 1496 Seminole St - Support for the Palmetto Fort project
- Julie Harris, 2908 Marshall Blvd – Support for the Palmetto Fort project
- Rochelle Rutledge, 1764 Atlantic Ave – Opposed to the Palmetto Fort project
- Chris Orr, 2877 Brownell Ave – Opposed to the Palmetto Fort project
- Kait Morrison, 2808 Brooks St – Opposed to the Palmetto Fort project
- Brandon & Mauri Brooks, 1907 I’On Ave – Opposed to the Palmetto Fort project
- Ryan & Mariah Blair, 1918 I’On Ave – Opposed to the Palmetto Fort project
- Mary Regner, 1914 I’On Ave – Opposed to Palmetto Fort project

- Bob Heller, 2320 I'On Ave – Opposed to Palmetto Fort project
- Kathy Craig Heller, 2320 I'On Ave – Opposed to Palmetto Fort project
- Brent & Nancy Havens, 1746 Thompson Ave - Opposed to Palmetto Fort project
- Stephanie England, 1908 I'On Ave - Opposed to Palmetto Fort project
- Lori & Mark Reinhardt, 2201 Atlantic Ave - Opposed to Palmetto Fort project
- Karen Burke, 2902 Marshall Blvd – Opposed to Palmetto Fort project
- Cindy Garland, 2 Citadel St – Opposed to Palmetto Fort project
- Rebecca & Philip Ufkes, 3024 Jasper Blvd – Opposed to Palmetto Fort project
- Laurie & Michael Arthur, 2850 Middle St – Opposed to Palmetto Fort project
- Katharine Crawford, 927 Middle St – Opposed to Palmetto Fort project
- Loren Ziff, 1412 Thompson Ave – Clarification on the Palmetto Fort project
- Tim & Beth Harrell, 1601 Middle St – Clarification on the Palmetto Fort project
- Peter Alexander, 918 Middle St – Clarification on the Palmetto Fort project
- Scott Stevens, 1850 Central Ave – Concerns regarding lawn equipment noise
- Kimberly Brown, 2118 Pettigrew St – Questions regarding orange pumps at Refuel
- Kimberly Brown, 2118 Pettigrew St – Welcome sign suggestion
- Carol Antman, Requesting funds for Island Club & SC250 celebration
- Bill Swayne, 1725 Atlantic Ave – Praise to Council member Laura Schroeder and her newsletter
- Brian Hellman, 2714 Atlantic Ave – Letter regarding aerial pesticides and chemicals sprayed over Accreted Land
- Charleston County Mosquito Control – Letter regarding mosquito control on Sullivan's Island

C. Administrator's Report:

Project Updates:

- The Stith Park Drainage Plan will be presented to the Recreation Committee meeting on February 10, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.
- The Stith Park Tot Lot renovations began this morning, with an estimated completion time of 3-4 weeks. All other areas of the park will remain open during construction.
- The Naval Information Warfare Center will be holding exercises at Station 22 on January 22-23. It is not a classified project but they request that the public not interfere.
- SCIP Grant update: the construction is currently focused on Station 31 and Middle Street and then will move further west. During the construction all residents will have access to their homes via steel plates and emergency vehicle access will remain in place. The project is currently on schedule.

Personnel anniversaries:

- Thomas Rabey, 2 years – Water & Sewer Department
- Nehemiah Clarke, 5 years – Building Department

### Special Events:

- The annual Charlie Post Run will take place from 9:00 a.m. – 12:00 p.m. this coming Saturday, January 24, 2026.
- The annual St. Patrick's Day celebration is schedule for Saturday, March 14 from 9:00 a.m. – 5:30 p.m. Special event applications are still coming in from participating vendors.

D. Attorney's Report: Town Attorney John Linton – nothing to report

E. Boards and Commissions Report:

- a) Planning Commission – Nothing to Report
- b) Board of Zoning Appeals – Nothing to Report
- c) Design Review Board – Zoning Administrator Charles Drayton stated they have partnered with the American College of Building Arts and some Island residents to do in-depth evaluations of historical properties to potentially add to the historic designation list.
- d) Tree Commission – Nothing to Report

### IV. Committee Reports – Discussion Items:

- A. Finance Committee – Comptroller Jason Blanton provided the financial report for December 2025. Revenue from property taxes will start arriving in the next few months. The budgeting process will also begin soon.
- B. Public Facilities Committee – A meeting date is to be determined. Chair Hubbard stated Mr. Drayton procured a Quick Claim Deed for Old Town Hall and hopes to see the Ad Hoc Committee resume work on deciding its future.
- C. Land Use and Natural Resources Committee – Chair Higgins stated the Tree Commission will decide where to locate the tree replacements. Director of Resilience and Natural Resource Management Rebecca Fanning reviewed a letter from Charleston County reviewing the Town's mosquito spraying practices. Residents can sign up for alerts when mosquito trucks are spraying in their area by visiting the Mosquito Control Program page of the Charleston County website.
- D. Administration Committee – Chair Schroeder stated the Committee is reviewing the Town's existing sexual harassment policy. They are also hoping to improve participation at all meetings.
- E. Water & Sewer Committee – The DES inspection on our water system went well. The next meeting will be held on Thursday, January 22, 2026 at 9:15 a.m.
- F. Public Safety Committee –
  - Police Chief Meadows reviewed good news stories from the department and stated the annual Polar Plunge event went well, with no major issues. Total expenditures for the Town for the event were \$11,700.
  - Fire Chief Stith stated a fire at the Obstinate Daughter restaurant earlier in the month, which was caused by oil rags being stored outside. There were no major damage or injuries.
- G. Recreation Committee – Tot lot renovations started today. The next meeting regarding the park drainage plan will be on Tuesday, February 10, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

### V. Executive Session

**Motion was made by Councilmember Higgins, seconded by Councilmember Burkhold, to go into Executive Session at 8:11 p.m., passed unanimously.**

Items Discussed:

1. **Legal:** Legal advice regarding Stockdale v. TOSI (Attorney J. Linton)
2. **Personnel:** Boards and Commission Seats – Review of applications submitted for seats on the Planning Commission (J. Henderson)

**Motion was made by Councilmember Higgins, seconded by Councilmember Hubbard to return from Executive Session at 9:15 p.m., passed unanimously.**

There were no votes taken or motions made during Executive Session.


VI. Upon Returning to Open Session, Council may take action on items discussed during Executive Session

**Motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Novak, seconded by Councilmember Burkhold to appoint Hannah Dodson and Gary Visser to the two open Planning Commission seats, expiring in September 2026, passed unanimously.**

VII. Adjournment

**Motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Novak, seconded by Councilmember Higgins, to adjourn the meeting at 9:16 p.m., passed unanimously.**

Respectfully submitted,



Bridget Welch