

**City of Pickens
Special Called Meeting
June 16, 2025
6:00 p.m.**

The Mayor and City Council convened at City Hall 219 Pendleton Street, Pickens S.C. for a Special Called Meeting. Agendas were posted and sent to media on June 11, 2025.

Council Members in Attendance:

Mayor, Isaiah Scipio
Council Member, Floyd Rogers
Council Member, John McManus
Council Member, Ray Wilson
Council Member Allie Winter
Absent: Mayor Pro-Tem Cameron Rivers

Staff:

Administrator, Tim O'Briant
Finance Director, Mandy Hess
Police Chief, Randall Beach
Fire Chief, Chris Elrod
Recreation Director, Jonathon Morris

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER:

Mayor Scipio called the meeting to order and welcomed those in attendance. Mayor Scipio noted the absence of Council Member Cameron Rivers. Fire Chief Chris Elrod gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMENTS FROM MAYOR SCIPIO:

Mayor Scipio stated that public comments are listed on the agenda this evening due to this being the first time Council has met outside of Budget Work Sessions. Mayor Scipio also reiterated the budget work sessions are public meetings and open to the public.

COMMENTS FROM CITIZENS: None.

FY-2023 AUDIT FORENSIC REVIEW UPDATE:

Finance Director, Mandy Hess reminded Council that \$50,000 was added to the FY 2025/26 Budget for a Forensic Audit if Council deem necessary. Ms. Hess gave the following update:

- The accountants have determined that \$32,000 should be reclassified to the CWS expenditures. Auditor also believe this amount could be larger.
- Additional funds are believed to be involved in the water and sewer adjustment process where the adjustment was posted twice.
- Staff has found voided/reissued checks – meaning some checks were voided in the software but cleared the bank. Ms. Hess stated she and staff went back and did a review of every check written during this time frame.
- The accountants will do a review and final analysis of these findings and report back to staff. Ms. Hess concluded by stating this has been an extremely tedious and time-consuming process and thanked Council for patience. However, progress is being made,

and the accountants feel confident about the identification of at least half of the unreconciled funds.

Administrator O'Briant thanked Ms. Hess, Dana Epps, and the accountants for their time and effort into this process. Mr. O'Briant reminded Council that Ms. Hess was not employed with Pickens during the time of these errors.

Council Member Floyd Rogers inquired about how much of the funds was identified. It was clarified that accountants believe \$85,000 has been identified out of the original \$157,000.

Council Member John McManus stated he realized we can not move forward with the next Audit until the 2023 is complete but asked about the internal functions of closing out the years from 2022/2023. Ms. Hess stated the 2023/2024 bank reconciliation will need to be redone, but the 2024/2025 close should go well, and that process will begin within the next month.

Council thanked Ms. Hess and staff for their continued work and updates.

CONSIDERATION OF FIRST READING APPROVAL OF AMENDMENT TO PICKENS CITY CODE SEC.7.3 FIRE PROTECTION SERVICES FEE:

Administrator Tim O'Briant gave Council the following memorandum regarding the FY 2025/2026 Budget as it relates to Fire Fees and Fire Services. Mr. O'Briant stated the issue was discussed during the May 28th budget work session to look at going from a flat fee to assessed value.

The proposed amendments to Section 7-3 of the City of Pickens Code of Ordinances update the Fire Protection Services Fee structure to improve equity, ensure sufficient funding for fire protection, and simplify administration. The changes are summarized as follows:

1. Annual Fee Requirement

A fire protection services fee will be charged annually to each owner of real property within the City of Pickens for every taxable parcel, including tax-exempt properties subject to a fee-in-lieu of taxes.

2. Billing and Fund Allocation

- The fire fee will appear as a separate line item on property tax or fee-in-lieu tax bills.
- All collected fees will be placed in a designated fund within the City's General Fund and used exclusively for operational and capital needs of the Pickens Fire Department.

3. Fee Schedule and Calculation

The fee amounts are based on the property type and assessed value. Key components include:

- Minimum Fee: \$131.25 for all properties, regardless of value.
- Multi-Family Units: \$131.25 for the first 1-3 units; \$75 for each additional unit beyond 3.
- Value-Based Calculation:
 - Fee = Assessed Value × 3.25%
 - Assessment ratios vary: 4% or 6% depending on property classification.
 - Example:
 - \$200,000 residential parcel × 4% = \$8,000 assessed value → \$8,000 × 0.0325 = \$260
 - \$200,000 commercial parcel × 6% = \$12,000 assessed value → \$12,000 × 0.0325 = \$390

4. Valuation of Vacant Land and Improved Property

- Vacant Land: Valued at \$1,000 per acre for fee calculation.
- Tax-Exempt Property: Valued at \$100 per square foot of interior first floor space. (The envelope).
 - Example: 3,000 sq. ft. × \$100 = \$300,000 × 6% = \$18,000 assessed value × 0.0325 = \$585

This updated ordinance ensures all properties contribute fairly to the essential service of fire protection, supporting readiness and responsiveness across the City and also serves to properly shift the burden from ad valorem taxpayers to a fee for service.

Please let me know if additional details are needed in preparation for final consideration.

>>Chief Chris Elrod stated he thought this was the right path to sustain the Pickens Fire Department. Chief Elrod stated this system is also equitable as it relates to residential versus commercial. Mayor Scipio opened the floor for Council to ask Chief Elrod and Tim O'Briant questions.

Council Member John McManus inquired if there are properties at the 10.5%. Tim O'Briant stated the City does not have any property in this category as that is for industrial properties that usually have a fee-in-lieu. Mr. O'Briant stated that while it is rare to have an entity that would fall into that category, it can be left in the ordinance. Council concurred the 10.5% should be included. Mr. McManus asked how properties that do not currently receive a tax bill due to being exempt will now receive notice. Mr. O'Briant stated staff is working on this issue and also the issue as brought up by Council Member Allie Winter that the County's tax bill and tax receipt look different in the fact the bill is all together, and the receipt has a breakdown of taxes and fees. Mr. McManus would like to know prior to second reading in order to amend language of a separate bill if needed.

Chief Elrod stated having just received the data from the Pickens County as it relates to all property within the city limits, he will be working on fees for everything including exempt properties. He has not filtered the government entities to date.

Council Member Allie Winter sited a correction on page (2) that should be \$12,000 instead of \$8,000. Also, the first line of the ordinance to state, "City Council has reviewed."

Council Member Floyd Rogers inquired about the collection of the fees. Mr. O'Briant stated the fees are collected and will go into the General Fund and used for fire protection purposes. Mr. O'Briant informed Council how the fees come to the City from the Pickens County as collected. Tax bills go out in October and taxes are due by January.

>>>Council Member Allie Winter moved to consider First Reading of an Ordinance to Amend Pickens City Code sec.7.3 Fire Protection Services Fee as amended that Council obtain the needed information regarding tax exempt property billing, and the edits of page (1) paragraph (1) "City Council has reviewed". And the typo on page (2) commercial property "\$12,000 and not \$8,000." Motion was seconded by Council Member Floyd Rogers and unanimously passed.

ENTER INTO EXECUTIVE SESSION PURSUANT TO SOUTH CAROLINA CODE OF LAWS SECTION 30-4-70(A)(1) FOR THE PURPOSE OF DISSING THE EMPLOYMENT, APPOINTMENT, COMPENSATION, PROMOTION, DEMOTION, DISCIPLINE, OR RELEASE OF AN, MATTERS RELATED TO THE CONTRACT RENEWAL AND EMPLOYMENT OF THE CITY ADMINISTRATOR:

Mayor Scipio read the motion to convene into Executive Session. Mayor Scipio stated the portion of this item regarding the Administrator's Contract will not be discussed until January when the Council is seated after the election. Mr. McManus stated it was his understanding this executive session was about performance review and not contractual.

>>Motion was made by Council Member Floyd Rogers, seconded by Council Member John McManus, and unanimously approved to convene into executive session for the stated purpose.

RECONVENE INTO PUBLIC SESSION:

>>Motion was made by Council Member John McManus, seconded by Council Member Allie Winter, and unanimously approved to reconvene into public session.

ACTION AS A RESULT OF EXECUTIVE SESSION:

Having discussed the performance and review of the City Administrator. Motion was made by Council Member John McManus to establish in the FY 2025/2026 Budget a 10% base pay

increase above the COLA for Administrator Tim O'Briant. Motion was seconded by Council Member Floyd Rogers and unanimously approved.

Administrator O'Briant thanked Council for this vote of confidence and stated he continues to be a pleasure to serve the community of Pickens and City Council.

ADJOURNMENT:

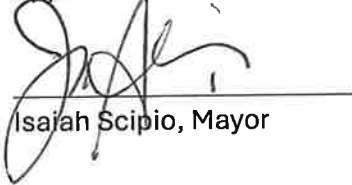
Hearing no further business, Mayor Scipio called for the motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Council Member Allie Winter, seconded by Council Member Floyd Rogers, and unanimously approved to adjourn. Pickens City Council stood adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:



Donna F. Owen, City Clerk

Approve



Isajah Scipio, Mayor