



**COUNCIL LEGISLATIVE COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 17, 2024**

CALL TO ORDER

The Council Legislative Committee conducted a meeting on Tuesday, September 17, 2024 at City Hall (Mayor’s Conference Room), 1737 Main Street, Second Floor, Columbia, South Carolina 29201. The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann, Mayor called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m.

Attendee Name	Title	Status
Daniel J. Rickenmann	Chair	Present
Will Brennan	Member	Present
Aditi Bussells	Member	Present

COMMITTEE DISCUSSION

1. Automated Traffic Safety Technologies – Ms. Jessica Shand, The Southern Group – *Endorsed for City Council Consideration*

Ms. Jessica Shand, The Southern Group presented on behalf of Citizens for Safe Streets, a non-profit advocating for Automated Road Safety Technology (ARST) to reduce traffic deaths in South Carolina. The state leads in deaths per 100 million vehicle miles. The technology now captures only the offender's license plate, not their face.

There was discussion about privacy concerns; tickets enforcement in other states; legislative pushback; need for action in school zones; potential champion to push bill forward; bill language; and goals for the legislative session.

Mayor Rickenmann recommended presenting it to City Council as an opt-in option, with a funding proposal and sharing a resolution with other municipalities.

Councilor Brennan suggested partnering with school districts for a pilot program.

There was consensus of the Committee to add Agenda **Item 1** to Executive Session for the October 1, 2024 City Council meeting.

2. State Legislative Watchlist for 2025 Session - Mr. Kyle Michel, Kyle Michel Law Firm; Mr. Damon Jeter, Jet Corp Consulting Group, LLC; and Ms. Caroline Delleney, Due South Advocacy, LLC – *Received as information.*



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Ms. Pamela Benjamin, CPM, Assistant City Manager for Administrative Services said we are being proactive about some of the anticipated bills and state legislation on the watch list. This is a list of staff recommendations and things from previous legislative sessions.

Mr. Kyle Michel, Kyle Michel Law Firm provided an overview of the topics and bills that are currently being monitored for the 2025 session.

Ms. Teresa Knox, City Attorney explained that under the current state law a dog bite automatically results in liability, which applies primarily to pet owners but now extends to shelters as well. There are no defenses available to the city in these cases.

Mr. Kyle Michel, Kyle Michel Law Firm explained that liquor liability insurance was highly debated in the last legislative session, with significant challenges faced by restaurants and entertainment venues in affording liability insurance. Currently, this matter is under review by a study committee.

There was discussion about cities being united against effects on the hospitality industry and small businesses; brown-bagging and disinformation; rising costs; license reform and outdated liquor laws; businesses choosing other states; and restaurant closings.

Mr. Kyle Michel, Kyle Michel Law Firm explained that vaping regulation has remained on the list as a concern and asked for feedback. It was passed in the Senate but did not move in the House.

Mayor Rickenmann raised concerns about the growing issue of illegal vaping products. There is currently no effective regulation or enforcement in place. He expressed particular concern about underage users.

There was discussion about the product registration; legality of vaping products and additional federal authority in the bill.

Mr. Kyle Michel, Kyle Michel Law Firm explained **H. 374**, which involved municipal election changes and trying to move elections to a different date. It passed the House and the Senate amended and passed the bill, however the House never utilized the Senate's amendments to the bill.

There was discussion about reasons to change election dates.



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Mr. Kyle Michel, Kyle Michel Law Firm provided an explanation regarding **S. 1017**, a bill addressing property tax exemptions for nonprofit housing corporations. He emphasized the importance of passing this legislation to correct an oversight in a 2020 bill. The legislation aims to benefit nonprofit-owned developments that provide affordable housing, making these projects more economically sustainable.

Mayor Rickenmann highlighted that some apartment complexes which were sold to nonprofits are no longer being utilized for affordable housing as originally intended. They are using the status to avoid being taxed instead of paying the full bill of sale.

Mr. Kyle Michel, Kyle Michel Law Firm discussed **H. 4118** – Community Development Tax Credits. This bill aims to extend a tax credit that expired on June 30, 2023 to June 30, 2029. It was passed by the House in 2023 but did not move forward in the Senate in 2024. The tax credits are used by community development organizations to attract donations that support their funding efforts. The bill is expected to be reintroduced in the future.

There was discussion about why it stalled in the Senate.

Mr. Kyle Michel, Kyle Michel Law Firm shared the anticipated topics for 2025:

- **S. 251 Worker’s Comp for First Responder PTSD**
- **Short Term Rentals**
- **Tort Claims Act Changes**
- **Return to Work Proviso**

Ms. Pamela Benjamin, CPM, Assistant City Manager for Administrative Services explained that the proviso for law enforcement was removed along with provisos for other essential employees. The proviso is important because of its impact on us as a city. We had individuals working under the proviso before it was removed.

Dr. Tiniece Javis, Director of Human Resources noted that 13 individuals used the proviso, which helps with recruitment, retention, and maintaining experienced professionals. However, it poses a challenge for PEBA due to financial losses when retirees continue working.

There was discussion about departments that utilized the proviso; recommendations for talent retention and the retiree system; and applicable scenarios.



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Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager explained that lobbyists advocated for the proviso in response to COVID. Last year, we realized that removing COVID provisions also impacted employees' ability to return without restrictions, prompting us to focus on removing this specific component separately.

Mr. Kyle Michel, Kyle Michel Law Firm shared the State Owned Road Maintenance Standards.

There was discussion about leverage, partnerships, and beautification efforts.

There was consensus of the Committee to meet more often during the Legislative session.

3. Review of Fines for Littering - The Honorable Aditi Bussells – *Received as information*

Councilor Bussells argued that a \$50 fine is too low to hold people accountable for illegal dumping and that increasing the fine would highlight its seriousness and encourage behavioral change.

There was a discussion about the various types of littering; the challenges faced by the city; evictions ; the approach taken by other municipalities; and the issuance of citations.

There was consensus of the Committee on the need for improved communication between lobbyists, staff, and committee members regarding bills and other legislation, and agreed to meet more consistently during the legislative session to ensure better coordination and timely updates.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 11:30 a.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk