



COLUMBIA CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES TUESDAY, APRIL 15, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

The Columbia City Council conducted a Budget Workshop on Tuesday, April 15, 2025 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 1:08 p.m. and the following City Council members were present: The Honorable Edward H. McDowell, Jr., The Honorable Will Brennan, Mayor Pro-Tem, The Honorable Aditi Bussells, The Honorable Tina N. Herbert, The Honorable Peter M. Brown, and The Honorable Tyler D. Bailey. Also present were Ms. Teresa Wilson, City Manager and Ms. Erika D. Moore Hammond, City Clerk. This meeting was advertised in accordance with the South Carolina Freedom of Information Act.

INVOCATION

The Honorable Edward H. McDowell, Jr. offered the invocation.

CITY COUNCIL DISCUSSION

1. Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Budget Overview and Special Revenues - Ms. Missy Caughman, CPM, MPA, Assistant City Manager / Strategic Initiatives & Innovation

Ms. Missy Caughman, CPM, MPA, Assistant City Manager / Strategic Initiatives & Innovation presented an overview of the current budget and special revenues, including hospitality and accommodations taxes, tourism and development fees, and the liquor rebate. She noted stable but flattening growth in hospitality tax revenues and requested City Council guidance on committee allocations ahead of upcoming meetings. She also outlined the hospitality tax grant program and noted that accommodations tax revenues are remitted quarterly by the state.

There was discussion about carry forwards; input on marketing and metrics for tourism groups; the 5% increase for line item agencies; restrooms for the downtown area; Accommodations Tax Advisory Committee application; tourism development fee being used for beautification projects; comparative data within collected hospitality taxes; and a potential grant program for neighborhood association events.



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2. Marketing & Communications Update - Mr. Justin Stevens, Acting Director / Public Relations, Media and Marketing Department and Mr. Bryant Lambert, SVP, Client Relations / Crawford Strategies

Mr. Justin Stevens, Acting Director of the Public Relations, Media, and Marketing Department provided an update on the department's recent growth and reorganization. He noted strong collaboration across city departments as the new branding continues to be embraced. After operating with six full-time team members, the department has expanded by adding three new team members and is now realigning responsibilities to better match individual strengths. He introduced the current team, which includes Brianna Childs, Meghan Thomas, Kristin Holzer, Erica Claycomb, Madison Rivers, Elizabeth East (Belcher), Julia Celio, Chazz Nevils, and Veronica Walker.

Mr. Bryant Lambert, SVP at Crawford Strategies reviewed progress in city branding and communications, highlighting 115+ social media posts, 100+ creative projects, and various partnerships. He noted 70+ media pitches, growing social media engagement, and a website audit recommending improved search engine optimization (SEO).

There was discussion about Tik Tok; implementing regular audits; defaulting to all white on Vista planter mockups; rotating picture backdrops on Main Street and on trails; budgeting for marketing ideas; Office of Business Opportunities having their own site for engagement/social media; assigning staff to maintain site content and functionality; tagging Council members in content to expand the reach; presence in local media; and development of a 12-24 month public relations roadmap.

There was a recess from 2:55-3:08.

3. Columbia Water Update - Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager / Columbia Water

Mr. Clint Shealy, P.E., Assistant City Manager for Columbia Water, shared updates on regulatory compliance, supporting Council and City Manager's growth initiatives, improvements in customer service, and capital project execution. He noted reduced work order backlogs, use of trenchless technology, and contractor oversight. All Consent Decree deliverables were submitted, with EPA-approved amendments. Key projects include \$1 million in electrical upgrades and \$610 million in infrastructure investments. Despite inflation and delays, the department remains financially strong while adjusting plans and aligning with future growth.



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There was discussion about the amount of acceptable backlog per month; specifying which projects are requesting extension; and linking water usage projections to economic development.

EXECUTIVE SESSION

Upon a motion made by Mr. Brennan and seconded by Ms. Herbert, Council voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 3:40 p.m. for the discussion of **Items 4 and 5.**

4. Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(2)
 - *Resilient Water Supply Project*
5. Receipt of legal advice relating to a pending, threatened or potential claim pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(2)
 - *Henrietta Wilson v. City of Columbia*
 - *Victoria Claypoole v. City of Columbia and SCDOT*
 - *Ashley Brown v. City of Columbia*

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, CMC
City Clerk