



Columbia City Council Budget Workshop Minutes Tuesday, June 16, 2026

Call to Order

The Columbia City Council conducted a Budget Workshop on Tuesday, June 16, 2026 at City Hall (Mayor's Conference Room), 1737 Main Street, Columbia, South Carolina 29201. The Honorable Daniel J. Rickenmann, Mayor called the meeting to order at 2:07 p.m., and the following members were present: The Honorable Will Brennan, The Honorable Tina N. Herbert, Mayor Pro-Tempore, The Honorable Peter M. Brown, The Honorable Tyler D. Bailey, and The Honorable Sam P. Johnson. The Honorable Edward H. McDowell, Jr., was absent. 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 Peter M. Brown offered the invocation.

Adoption of the Agenda

Upon a motion made by Ms. Herbert and seconded by Mr. Brennan, Council voted unanimously to adopt the agenda subject to adding the discussion of the employment of an employee pursuant to §30-4-70(a)(1) – Municipal Court Judges and the discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(2) - 911 Discussions/Contract.

City Council Discussion

1. Fiscal Year 2026/2027 Special Revenues — Ms. Missy Caughman, CPM, MPA, Assistant City Manager / Strategic Initiatives & Innovation

- *Hospitality Tax Fund*
- *Accommodations Tax Fund*
- *Tourism Development Fee*
- *Liquor Permit Rebate*

Mayor Rickenmann outlined several allocations and adjustments, including \$1.1 million for the Columbia Museum of Art, \$285,000 for the Columbia Music Festival Association, \$575,000 for EdVenture, \$800,000 for Historic Columbia, and \$225,000 for OneColumbia. He noted increases for Historic Columbia's SC63 OurStory project from \$260,000 to \$275,000, Benedict College's Harambee Festival from \$80,000 to \$100,000, the Christmas Parade from \$10,000 to \$25,000, ColaJazz Foundation from \$75,000 to \$100,000, Columbia Township from \$135,000 to \$150,000, the Columbia International Festival from \$150,000 to \$175,000, the Columbia Classical Ballet from \$125,000 to \$150,000, First Thursdays from \$30,000 to \$35,000, Gemini Arts from \$5,000 to \$30,000, and the Greater Rosewood Merchants Association from \$60,000 to \$80,000. He confirmed allocations of \$210,000 for

the Growth Collective (Black Expo), an increase to \$12,500 for the South Carolina Brewers Association, and \$50,000 for the High School League. Additional adjustments included bringing the South Carolina Research Foundation's Koger Center Music Festival allocation to \$20,000, allocating \$60,000 for Juneteenth, and providing \$25,000 for the Varna International Music Academy and Sister City Kaiserslautern Choral Project. He also noted that the \$250,000 allocation for Korn Ferry was removed from the hospitality tax and recommended for consideration under the accommodations tax instead.

Ms. Missy Caughman, CPM, MPA, Assistant City Manager / Strategic Initiatives & Innovation noted that all items have been incorporated into the proposed budget and emphasized that all allocations and awards remain subject to the same rules and expectations, including requirements for eligible and reimbursable expenses.

2. External Funding Requests - Ms. Missy Caughman, CPM, MPA, Assistant City Manager / Strategic Initiatives & Innovation

Ms. Missy Caughman, CPM, MPA, Assistant City Manager / Strategic Initiatives & Innovation explained that several external funding requests are not eligible for special revenue sources such as hospitality tax, accommodations tax, or the tourism development fee. She noted that these requests total just over \$1 million, while only \$280,000 in general fund is available. She shared that the requests were grouped by potential funding sources. She added that several programmatic requests relate to initiatives previously supported by the general fund or American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds, but the ARPA funding has now been fully allocated. She stated that remaining funds will be reconciled later this summer.

Mayor Rickenmann highlighted several external funding requests, noting prior support for the Columbia Council of Neighborhoods, the Urban League, and the Community Relations Council, as well as the City's request to support the "Beyond the Bridge" homelessness documentary. He also reviewed new requests, including one from the Afterschool Alliance, which previously received \$5,000 in hospitality tax support, and a \$75,000 request from the Lourie Center following last year's transitional funding. He expressed interest in a workforce student-loan assistance program but noted that neither Human Resources nor the City has funds available for it. He emphasized that all requests must be weighed carefully given the limited funding available.

There was discussion about previous requests for consistency; water bill donations for the Urban League; transition from flyer to electronic distribution; previous funding levels for the Columbia Council of Neighborhoods; allocations to local businesses; and the deadline for consideration.

Ms. Missy Caughman, CPM, MPA, Assistant City Manager / Strategic Initiatives & Innovation said the next group of requests involves special revenue funds and has been organized according to eligible funding sources. She noted that the Accelerator for America Spring Meeting includes proposed allocations to the Columbia Metropolitan Convention Center and the Midlands Regional Sports Council. These allocations would be funded using accommodations tax surplus, which would require a budget amendment after July, if City Council chooses to proceed.

Mayor Rickenmann explained that City Council could move forward pending available funding. He highlighted upcoming requests, including \$75,000 for the Parks and Recreation Foundation, \$50,000 for the Stream Arts Program, and an increase requested by the Main Street District for expanded cleanup services. He also referenced the Bethal AME restoration project as a multi-year request of \$1 million through Historic Columbia and

SC63. Additionally, he noted an \$85,000 request from Public Relations for a cookbook initiative promoting city culture and culinary assets. He acknowledged ongoing allocations such as those for the River Alliance and WOW Studios.

Councilor Johnson recommended the following allocations: \$50,000 for the Office of Business Opportunities, \$285,000 for Columbia Council of Neighborhoods (CCN), \$40,000 for the Urban League, \$45,000 for the Community Relations Council, and \$10,000 for the documentary project. He further recommended \$25,000 for Richland County Public Education Partners (RCPEP) and \$75,000 for Senior Resources, noting that these recommendations total approximately \$273,000, leaving about \$500. He also highlighted the strong work of the SC Afterschool Alliance, noting his experience as its former chair and acknowledging the organization's past support for a hospitality tax allocation. He acknowledged the Mayor's earlier reference to a possible student-loan assistance program, noting that while the idea has merit, it would be challenging to fund at this time.

There was a discussion about the difference between the accommodations tax surplus and 5% general purpose accommodations tax; the assignment of the balance of liquor rebate funds; WOW Studio application for the Theater and Film Festival; Bethel AME allocation; clarification of Main Street District request; determining eligibility for the Brasley Foundation; Historic Columbia funding; and a funding source for the Tnovsa Global Commons - Catherine Fleming Bruce request.

Mr. Roy Brasley, The Sally R. Brasley Foundation explained that when funding was requested last year for the gala, Nova Fest, and giveaways, only Nova Fest was approved, and the reason for denying the gala was not provided. He noted that the amount awarded for Nova Fest was significantly lower than the full cost of the event and described the typical expenses involved, emphasizing that the funding has consistently fallen short. He further stated that there had been no follow-up regarding a previous \$600,000 request and wanted to bring the matter forward before the start of the new fiscal year. His desire was to use that amount to spread it out over the years instead of one time.

Mayor Rickenmann stated that the committee had previously requested complete information and documentation in order to move forward with reimbursement, but it appears this has not yet been provided. He emphasized the importance of having applications and data, such as attendance and economic impact, especially for recurring events like Nova Fest. He noted that the reserved funds were tied to a specific event and that all incurred costs and documentation must be clarified and submitted before any further steps can be taken.

Councilor Herbert stated that documentation must be submitted by a clear deadline, perhaps 60 days, to properly close out the prior funding request. She noted that if the required materials had been received, the reimbursement would have already been issued, and therefore any previously submitted documents should be resubmitted. She emphasized that establishing a time limit would prevent the need to revisit the matter in future years.

There was consensus of the City Council to have staff review the submitted materials and bring back the Sally R. Brasley Foundation request at the July 21, 2026 meeting.

Executive Session

Upon a motion made by Ms. Herbert and seconded by Mr. Johnson, Council voted unanimously to enter into Executive Session at 3:26 p.m. for the discussion of **Item 3** and as amended to include the discussion of the employment of an employee pursuant to §30-

4-70(a)(1) – Municipal Court Judges and the discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(2) - 911 Discussions/Contract.

3. Receipt of legal advice relating to matters covered by attorney-client privilege pursuant to S.C. Code §30-4-70(a)(2)

Forest Acres Franchise Fee

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned at 4:40 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted:

Erika D. Moore Hammond, MMC, CPM
City Clerk