



**SURFSIDE BEACH TOWN COUNCIL REGULAR MEETING**  
Civic Center, 829 Pine Drive, Surfside Beach, SC 29575  
[www.surfsidebeach.org](http://www.surfsidebeach.org) - (843) 913-6111 (843) 238-5432

**TOWN COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, May 23, 2023, • 6:30 PM.**

1. **CALL TO ORDER** – Mayor Hellyer called the Meeting to order at 6:30 pm. Councilmembers Drake, Kreklau, Kinken, Stamey, and Mayor Pro Tempore Keating were in attendance. Absent: Councilmember Holder. Others present were Town Administrator Vincent, Town Attorney Bouchette and Town Clerk Medina.
2. **INVOCATION AND PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
  - A. **Invocation:** John Shaffer, Discovery Church, gave the invocation
  - B. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Mayor Hellyer led in the Pledge of Allegiance.
3. **PUBLIC HEARING – ORDINANCE 23-0956, AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF SURFSIDE, TO ADOPT THE 2023-24 FISCAL YEAR MUNICIPAL BUDGET AND TO SET THE TAX MILLAGE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2024.**

Mayor Hellyer opened the public hearing. Chief Clemons gave a PowerPoint presentation of the budget. (Attached).

**Public Comment**

a. **Harry Kohlmann**, 10<sup>th</sup> Ave North, When you talk about four mills, \$6.00 per month, 20 cents per day. Two firefighters per truck. That is useless. Very very bad scenario. We're lucky no one has died. Thank God for firefighters who want to risk their lives, and you don't want to give them enough. Wow. Twenty cents a day, that all folks, for the safety of the residents, but it's also for firefighters. I don't understand it. You have to change the way you do things. The public works only work Monday through Friday; maybe change it around. They do a great job, but you have to change that. Well, the police department, I love them. I bleed blue. Sometimes, you have to look at other things. Why are police officers leaving after being trained? Is it salary? Did not get paid enough? In a forensic audit, we're going to spend \$100,000. Does somebody have something that they know? If you do, you should go to the Attorney General with it. But if you're doing it because someone feels they need to be done, it's crazy unless you have something. That is a lot of money to throw away. We have a lot of great events here. But we must evaluate each event and critique it ultimately because we can save money. I know some of y'all loved the golf cart parades. It might not cost anything, but I know it does because you have to use the police to block streets. I will not say eliminate all, but some of them, maybe. And then look at each of our events. Is it cost-effective? This community is beautiful. But, like I said, 20 cents a day put me in for ten years right now. I'll give it to you. Thank you.

Mayor Hellyer closed the public hearing.

4. **MOTIONS RELATING TO THE AGENDA - None**

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5. **MINUTES APPROVAL** – Councilmember Drake motioned to approve the minutes as presented for March 9, 2023. Councilmember Keating second. All voted in favor. **Motion carried.**

6. **PUBLIC COMMENTS** – None

7. **COMMUNICATIONS**

**A. OATH OF OFFICE – WES HOUK** – Mayor Hellyer administered the Oath of Office for Lieutenant Wes Houk. Chief Hofmann gave a little background on Mr. Houk's education, career, and how he got to Surfside Beach.

**B. EMPLOYEE SERVICE AWARD – LARRY CARTER – 10 YEARS-** Chief Clemons presented Larry Carter with his ten-year service award. Chief Clemons stated Larry is a very dedicated firefighter for the town, and I am so lucky to have him, as well as my Deputy Chief. I've been your fire Chief for almost two years, and when I got here, Larry was the acting Chief, and I didn't know how this would go because they didn't know me, and I didn't know Larry. You have to have a quality team and great people and have that number two. I don't consider him number two. We do this together. We are fortunate to have him.

Deputy Chief Carter stated he has been a career firefighter for 25 years. He appreciates the opportunity Surfside Beach has given him for ten years and looks forward to the next 10.

**C. ADMINISTRATORS REPORT** – Town Administrator Vincent/ Chief Clemons  
Mr. Vincent stated he has been meeting with Councilmembers, Directors and staff. There will be a few managers' meetings that he will be attending. And lastly, he is excited to be here. The staff has been very accommodating. Chief Clemons was an excellent choice for Interim Administrator. He kept projects moving forward.

Chief Clemons gave a short update about the pier. A lot of work is still going on. Concrete resurfacing is complete. The pier handrail is complete. Inlaid decking on the pier is still in progress. The storefront installation is complete. The rooftop walkway has been installed in building A. Sheetrock installation is still in progress. There has been demobilization of the trestle. Electrical fixtures continue to be installed. The elevator installation is complete. The fire suppression is still in progress plumbing is continuing to be installed. The fish table is in progress; there will be some painting. The telephone and internet drops are still to be done.

**D. FINANCE REPORT** – Given by Director King.

8. **BUSINESS**

**A. SECOND READING - ORDINANCE 23-0955 - AUTHORIZING AND DIRECTING THE TOWN OF SURFSIDE BEACH TO ENTER INTO AN INTERGOVERNMENTAL AGREEMENT RELATING TO SOUTH CAROLINA LOCAL REVENUE SERVICES; TO PARTICIPATE IN ONE OR MORE LOCAL REVENUE SERVICES PROGRAMS; TO**

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**EXECUTE AND DELIVER ONE OR MORE PARTICIPANT PROGRAM SUPPLEMENTS; AND OTHER MATTERS THERETO.**

Councilmember Keating made a motion to accept the second reading of Ordinance 23-0955. Councilmember Drake second. All voted in favor. **Motion carried.**

**B. FIRST READING - ORDINANCE 23-0956, AN ORDINANCE OF THE TOWN OF SURFSIDE, TO ADOPT THE 2023-24 FISCAL YEAR MUNICIPAL BUDGET AND TO SET THE TAX MILLAGE FOR THE FISCAL YEAR ENDING JUNE 30, 2024.-** Chief Clemons reiterated some portions of the PowerPoint previously given.

Councilmember Keating stated you had initially included in the proposed budget about 15 additional employees. You came back and cut back to 7. When I look at the numbers given to us for department expenses in April and May, they do not reflect those reductions. Department administrative expenses were increased between April and May for an additional \$89,000.

Chief Clemons stated there was a cost escalation we had to put into each department. When we reduce the number of people, they're still cost escalation for services that need to be provided. If you are at full staff and, regardless of the department, you can reduce your overtime costs or keep your overtime costs within your budget. As events and other things happen within the town, there will still be ancillary overtime costs. If you're trying to fill those vacancies to reduce overtime, there will still be some overtime calls.

Councilmember Kinken stated that we are increasing the millage, but we didn't increase it enough to cover the additional deficit. I think it should balance. We should not have a budget where we're taking money out of reserves. Make it balanced. We don't want to raise the millage, but we understand we must. Whatever we approve this year, we're stuck with it for two years. I would like to see the forensic audit taken out and one person also.

Councilmember Stamey stated the \$169,00 coming from another fund is unacceptable. There is no reason to have a forensic audit. Let's get two firefighters and a Human resources person. As far as the rest of the people, I cannot see hiring that many people right now.

Councilmember Drake stated that we are the cheapest on the Grand Strand for parking. We should raise the fee to four dollars, so the additional will fund the Fire Department. People on vacation will pay extra to park.

Councilmember Stamey stated we know we need to raise the millage. We are going to eventually have more people. We really should have raised taxes last year.

Councilmember Kreklau stated everything goes up. If we could only trim the budget rather than raise taxes. Residents say they do not want a tax increase, but we need to know what level of safety they are comfortable with.

Mayor Hellyer stated the last time taxes were raised was in 2019. We have been very fortunate that we have not had to raise them since. The residents I have talked to are not concerned with a millage increase, just how much.

Councilmember Stamey made a motion to accept the first reading of the budget with the modifications of removing two employees, removing the forensic audit and raising the millage by four mils. Councilmember Kinken second.

Councilmember Kinken made an amended motion to accept as presented with the modifications to take out the forensic audit and remove one person, move one more person to mid-year and raise the millage by 4. No second. **Motion failed.**

The vote for the original motion is as follows: Councilmembers Kinken and Stamey voted in favor. Councilmember Drake, Keating, Kreklau, and Mayor Hellyer voted against. **Motion failed.**

Councilmember Drake made a motion to pass the budget with no millage increase. Hire the two firefighters and one public works employee and keep in the forensic audit. Have a special meeting to pass an Ordinance to raise the parking fees to \$4.00. No second. **Motion failed.**

Councilmember Kreklau motioned to accept the presented budget and raise the tax by four mils. Mayor Hellyer second.

Councilmembers Kinken, Kreklau, and Mayor Hellyer voted in favor. Councilmembers Drake, Keating and Stamey voted against. Tie vote. **Motion failed.**

Councilmember Keating made a recommendation that the Finance director rework the numbers based on some the the council input provided, and the Council can hold a special meeting to pass the first reading of the budget.

## 9. PUBLIC COMMENTS –

**A. Ann Westcott** - It's been my experience in life that you get what you pay for. If you want to live in a safe community, you have to pay for it, and I want to live in a safe community. Our police department has gone out of their way for me more than once. I came from Philadelphia. Not only don't you count on the police to protect you, you see them coming, you run. So as far as raising the millage, we want to do it if we have to. Inflation is high. It's not going to stop. There's nothing you can do about it. What are we going to do? We can't go into deficit spending. We're not the Federal Reserve. We have to bite the bullet and do what we do.

**B. Lynn Manchester**, 1414 Ocean Blvd, Let me tell you, every day, sometimes it's two o'clock in the morning, the alarm goes off. They are doing everything they can to get things done. I certainly think that an increase in the mil is not a problem. I support it. I also totally support your idea, Michael, about the parking fees. We have so much good in this town. All the fussing breaks my heart. Whenever I call Public Works with a problem, they help. Sabrina is always helpful. You have to have people to staff these positions.

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**C. Harry Kohlmann**, 10<sup>th</sup> Ave North – You have somebody out there; you must have people to staff these positions. I wish we would start looking at some of these other things. I also like to talk about the parking, if you raise it to \$4, it would be great if the tourists would pay it. The problem is that most tourists stay in beach houses two blocks away from the beach or the hotels on the beach. So who's paying to park, Caropines and Deerfield. I get it tourists come; therefore, they might spend a couple of extra bucks, but that's not the people parking. The people who are parking are people who are full-time residents. I was very disturbed seeing this on the website Pivot Parking is enforcing violations throughout the town; you might say, well, that's a great idea. Also terrible. We need them by the rental area and the beach where people are paying to park. The police department will always write them, and it's not happening. I know it's in the contract to do the whole town; it's ridiculous. Thank you.

**D. Gary White**, 315 B Lakeside Drive – stated in speaking about the budget there is a deficit of \$169,000. That is two mils. So that will cover what is short. I am not sure that will be enough. If we need to increase more, we should be done with it. Bite the bullet and raise the mils.

#### 10. **TOWN COUNCIL DISCUSSION AND/OR COMMENTS**

**A. Councilmember Stamey** – Thank you to everyone for coming out. Thank you to the Police and Fire Department. I have struggled with the mil increase. But I see we are going to have to do it. I would love to hear more comments from the public. I do listen. As a Council, we must do what is best for the residents. I would love to give everyone what they wanted. See you in a couple of weeks.

**B. Councilmember Drake**, Thank you to everyone for coming out and tuning in. With the budget, I do feel we need three firefighters going out. But again, it is back to funding. I think we need to look at parking. We have the golf cart parade on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Come out and have a good time. We are representing the Family Beach. We need to keep that in mind. Also, I would like to say Happy Birthday to South Carolina. We have to look at other alternatives.

**C. Councilmember Keating**, I thank everyone for coming out and for all the comments and perspectives. This is always a difficult time. It's not just a point of the numbers but ensures accuracy. In the beginning, we had a one million dollar deficit. We got it down to \$391,000. When things are moved around, I would like to have an explanation. I am not opposed to a tax increase. I would like to know precisely why. So if we go back and explain the differences, I believe this Council could pass the budget. Stay healthy, stay safe and see you in a couple of weeks.

**D. Councilmember Kinken** – I am glad to see people here, and I hope a lot tuned in. Congratulations to Lieutenant Houk and Deputy Chief Carter. With the budget, if you're, you're pulling out of savings to meet the everyday budget, it's not a one-time expenditure. I have a problem with that; that's why I've said, let's get rid of the audit, move one person to later in the year and see how it turns out; to me, that would get rid us of the \$169,000. Last year we got a nice boost in the property's value. Well, unfortunately, this year, that was eaten up by inflation. What we would gain this year is gone because of inflation! And I don't see a way around not raising the millage. We need

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to be covered this year and next year. Then, next, the following year, we have to look at it again. We're stuck with whatever we do this year for the next two.

We live in a great town. I think we're all here for the same reason because it is such a great town. First responders are part of what makes it great. Public Works makes it great. I've said it before, we are one the cleanest, most organized Towns anywhere I've been, and our staff does a great job. We're very fortunate to be here, and with that, I wish you all a good night and hope to see you in two weeks.

**E. Councilmember Kreklau** - First, I'd like to thank everyone who came out. I want to thank all the talented employees, especially all the department heads that went through this budget. I want to say that the tax increase is a slippery slope. Because if you have X amount of people, their wages will always go up. At some point, yes, you do have to raise taxes, and it does appear that this may be that. But I moved here from a town in Iowa and paid around \$500 a month in taxes. This is one of the reasons I moved here was for the low taxes. I would also like to say something about what Mr. Kohlmann brought up with Pivot Parking; as far as them patrolling the whole town, he said it was in the contract. It does not give a scope of what they take care of other than what they're directed to take care of. As a council member, I was not asked what I wanted to direct them to do. Who directed them to do the whole town? Maybe it's an increased benefit, because they're writing more tickets, I don't know. They're being spread around the town, and only two exist. It's taking away from their primary purpose. With that being said, goodnight, see you next time.

**F. Mayor Hellyer** - You can see on Council there's a lot of diversity here, and there are people with different opinions on what needs to be done, and I think that's good. But, at the same time, we must come to an adequate conclusion on the budget. We're going to get that done. Keep in mind we've got a lot going on this next weekend with Memorial Day and ceremonies that we have. We have the golf cart parade. I don't know if you remember the person who spoke last year at our Memorial Service. He's 94 years old. So, I look forward to seeing him again. He'll be our guest speaker at the Memorial Service. Last week, we had a presentation given by the Pier Committee and the Committee had a lot of objections as to how they were treated. We've talked about it in the executive session. I asked the town attorney if he would write something up, and at this time, I am going to read it.

"Through its Council, Mayor, and various department heads, the Town of Surfside Beach is constantly exploring new and/or better ways to deliver public services and improve our residents' and visitors' quality of life. As part of that process, the Town frequently engages public members willing to serve on committees sponsored by The Town. These committees ask their members to contribute their time and energy to explore and evaluate options for the Mayor and Council to consider and make recommendations based on their research and evaluation. The service of the citizens who serve on these committees is to be commended, and the Mayor and members of the Council want to thank any who have given of themselves to make the Town better.

However, these committees and their members should be reminded that they serve at the pleasure of the Town. Though Council and the Mayor welcome the ideas and recommendations of the committees and their various members, their purpose is solely to

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help the Mayor and members of the Council make decisions, which often requires consideration of additional issues beyond the Committee's mandate.

At a recent council meeting, members of the Pier Committee appeared to comment in the forum portion, ostensibly as members of the public. Unfortunately, their appearance was not as general members of the public but as members of the Committee seeking to voice their grievances against the town and the town administrator. Since this was a portion of the meeting designated for public comment, these individuals knew they could air their grievances to the public and not be challenged, corrected, or confronted with further context. As such, it was clear that this was a coordinated effort to attempt to embarrass the Town, Council, and the Town administrator.

Actions such as these will not be tolerated. The process of evaluating issues and making recommendations to the Council should be followed through proper channels outlined in the mandate of the Committee. Though any public member is free to speak at council meeting during the appropriate times, the Town Council will exercise its discretion to disband and terminate any committee whose members seek to circumvent the committee process to further their own agenda."

11. **EXECUTIVE SESSION** - Motion to adjourn Regular Meeting and enter Executive Session pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act Section 30-4-70(a)(1) Discussion of employment, appointment, compensation, promotion, demotion, discipline, or release of an employee. (Committees) Section 30-4-70(a)(2) Discussions of negotiations incident to proposed contractual arrangements. (Collins Engineering.) (Pier Parking Lot)

Councilmember Keating made a motion to enter the executive session at 9:05 PM. Councilmember Drake second. All voted in favor. **Motion carried.**

Mayor Hellyer resumes regular session at 10:49 PM.

12. **MOTIONS MADE FROM EXECUTIVE SESSION**

- A. Councilmember Keating made a motion to remove the committee member of the Stormwater Committee as discussed. Councilmember Drake second. All voted in favor. **Motion carried.**

- B. Councilmember Keating made a motion to Approve the change order for Collins Engineering. Councilmember Stamey second. All voted in favor. **Motion carried.**

- C. Councilmember Keaing made a motion to award the pier parking lot paving contract to Consensus Construction. Councilmember Drake second.

Councilmember Kinken suggested a rebid.

Councilmembers Drake, Keating Kreklau, and Mayor Hellyer voted in favor. Councilmembers Kinken and Stamey voted against. **Motion carried.**

13. **ADJOURNMENT** Councilmember Keating made a motion to adjourn at 10:44 PM. Councilmember Drake second. All voted in favor. **Motion carried.**

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**Surfside Beach Town Council**

\_\_\_\_\_  
Robert Hellyer, Mayor

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Cindy Keating, Mayor Pro Tempore

\_\_\_\_\_  
Chris Stamey, Town Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
LaVerne Kreklau, Town Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
Michael Drake, Town Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
William Kinken, Town Council

\_\_\_\_\_  
Paul Holder, Town Council

Attest: \_\_\_\_\_  
Sheri L Medina, Town Clerk

Clerk's Note: This document constitutes a summary of minutes of the Meeting that was digitally recorded and is not intended to be a complete transcript. Appointments to hear recordings may be made with the town clerk; a free copy of the audio will be given to you, **provided you bring a new, unopened flash drive. In accordance with FOIA §30-4-80(A) and (E)**, meeting notice and the agenda were distributed to local media and interested parties via the Town's email subscription list. The agenda was posted on the entry door at Council Chambers.

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