# JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL
# COUNCIL MEETING

**Jasper County Clementa C. Pinckney Government Building**
**358 Third Ave., Ridgeland, SC. 29936**
**Monday, May 4, 2026**
## Minutes

**Officials Present:** Chairman Joey Rowell, Vice Chairman Joseph Arzillo, Councilman John Kemp, Councilman Chris VanGeison and Councilman Gene Ceccarelli

**Staff Present:** County Administrator Andrew Fulghum, Lawrence Flynn, Interim County Attorney, Clerk to Council Wanda Giles, Kimberly Burgess, Eric Larson, Jim Iwanicki, Chief Russell Wells, Deputy Chief John A. Smith, and Videographer Jonathan Dunham.

### 3:00 PM: Workshop

- **Lawrence Flynn and Chief Wells - Consolidation of the Fire Service Districts and the Proposed Ordinance**

The Jasper County Council workshop focused heavily on the consolidation of fire service providers and the creation of a unified unincorporated fire district ahead of the upcoming fiscal year. Lawrence Flynn, Interim County Attorney, Staff, Elected Officials and legal counsel discussed the complexities of transitioning from multiple distinct tax districts and absorbing the Cherry Point fire district's debt into a single rural protection area. A significant portion of the conversation focused on ongoing contractual negotiations with the City of Hardeeville to define service territories and reduce potential annexation conflicts. Additionally, staff addressed the financial impacts of the current property reassessment, reviewing preliminary millage rollbacks and revenue projections to ensure adequate funding for the document provides an itemized record of the council's discussions on consolidating existing fire service areas into the unified Jasper County Rural Protection Fire District, novating the bond debt, and protection of service areas under 7 U.S.C. § 1926(b). It also detailed the financial analysis regarding millage restructuring, property reassessment under Act 388, and the proposed intergovernmental service agreement with the City of Hardeeville.

**Meeting to adjourn the workshop:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman VanGeison
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

### 5:00 PM: Council Executive Session

**1. Call the Council Meeting to Order by Chairman Rowell**

Chairman Rowell called the meeting to order. The Report of Compliance with the Freedom of Information Act was read for the records as follows: *In accordance with South Carolina Code of Laws, 1976, Section 30-4-80(d), as amended, notification of the meeting and the meeting agenda were posted at least 24 hours prior to the meeting on the County Council Building at a publicly accessible place, on the county website, and a copy of the agenda was provided to the local news media and all person's or organizations requesting notification.*

In accordance with the Freedom of Information Act the electronic and print media were notified. During periods of review, discussion and/or presentations minutes are typically condensed and paraphrased. The recorded version is available online at: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBmloqX05cKAsHm_ggXCJIA. Closed captions are also available for all of our County Council videos.

**2. Pledge of Allegiance and Invocation:**

The Pledge to the Flag was led by the Chairman and the Invocation was given by Chairman Rowell.

**3. Approval of the Agenda:**

**Motion to approve:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman Arzillo
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

**4. Approval of the Consent Agenda:**
Approval of the Consent Agenda passes all Consent Agenda Items. Consent Agenda Items are not considered separately unless a Councilmember requests it. In the event of such a request, the item is placed at the end of the Public Hearings, Ordinances, and Action Items.

**Motion to approve:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman Ceccarelli
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

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**CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS:**

**A) Approval of the Minutes 11.04.2025 and 11.06.2025.**

**B) Eric Larson – Approval of the 3rd Reading of Ordinance #O-2026-16 of Jasper County Council to Authorize a Settlement Agreement with Jasper County Radio Control Chapter No. 5096 of the Academy of Model Aeronautics, Inc.** *(1st Reading 04.06.2026; Public Hearing and 2nd Reading 04.20.2026)*

*This is the end of the Consent Agenda Items.*

**5. Executive Session SECTION 30-4-70.**

**(a) A public body may hold a meeting closed to the public for one or more of the following reasons:**

**(1) Discussion of employment, appointment, compensation, promotion, demotion, discipline, or release of an employee, a student, or a person regulated by a public body or the appointment of a person to a public body – (1) Interim County Administrator**

**(2) Discussion of negotiations incident to proposed contract arrangements and proposed purchase or sale of property, the receipt of legal advice, where the legal advice related to pending, threatened, or potential claim or other matters covered by the attorney-client privilege, settlement of legal claims, or the position of the public agency in other adversary situations involving the assertion against the agency of a claim –**

**(1) Professional Services for New County Administrator and New County Attorney services**
**(2) Tax Map #091-00-01-029**
**(3) Property at 600 3rd Avenue (previously the Law Office of Catherine Badgett) be upfitted as a county courtroom with judge's chambers for use by the Clerk of Court.**

**Any Executive Session Matter on Which Discussion Has Not Been Completed May Have Discussion Suspended for the Purpose of Beginning the Open Session at Its Scheduled Time, And Council May Return to Executive Session Discussion After the Conclusion of The Open Session Agenda Items.**
***Note: Please Be Advised, There May Be Votes Based on Items from the Executive Session.***

**Motion to go into executive session:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman Arzillo
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

## 6:00 PM: Regular Session

- **Come out of Executive Session:**

**Motion to approve:** Councilman VanGeison
**Second:** Councilman Arzillo
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

- **5.1. Council Action to be taken on items as discussed in Executive Session**

Action Items Arising from Executive Session:

1. **Appointment of Interim County Administrator**:

**Motion to appoint James Iwanicki as the Interim County Administrator during the search for a permanent County Administrator**: Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman Ceccarelli
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

2. **Executive Search Firm for County Administrator**:

**Motion to engage Swift Water Strategies for professional services to conduct a search for a new County Administrator and to assist with administrative duties associated with the Interim County Administrator role:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman Arzillo
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed

3. **Executive Search Firm for County Attorney**:

**Motion to engage Swift Water Strategies for professional services to conduct a search for a new County Attorney:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman VanGeison
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed

- **Return to Open Session:**

**Motion to approve:** Councilman Ceccarelli
**Second:** Councilman VanGeison
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

*Note: Council may act on any item appearing on the agenda, including items discussed in executive session.*

**6. PRESENTATIONS: None**

**7. CITIZEN COMMENTS:**

**Open Floor to the Public per Ordinance Number #08-17. Any citizen of the County may sign to speak in person at the Council Meeting (before the Council Meeting's 6:00 PM start time on the Sign-In Sheet on the Podium), to address the Council on matters pertaining to County Services and Operations. Presentations will be limited to <u>three (3) minutes per person,</u> and total public input will be limited to <u>30 MINUTES</u>.**

Priscilla Frazier addressed council during the citizen comments time.

## 8. RESOLUTIONS

**A) Eric Larson – Consideration of Resolution #R-2026-24 of Jasper County, SC. Approving a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Hardeeville for Maintenance of a Library in the Allendale-Hampton-Jasper Library System Located in the City of Hardeeville and Authorizing the County Administrator to Execute the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the County.**

Mr. Larson was present to review and discuss the consideration of Resolution #R-2026-24 of Jasper County, SC. for the approving of a Memorandum of Understanding with the City of Hardeeville for maintenance of a Library in the Allendale-Hampton-Jasper Library System which is located in the City of Hardeeville and to authorize the County Administrator to execute the Memorandum of Understanding on behalf of the County.

**Motion to approve:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman Ceccarelli
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

**B) Eric Larson – Consideration of Resolution #R-2026-25 of Jasper County, SC. Approving an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Hardeeville for Workforce Training Programs for Jasper County Residents and Authorizing the County Administrator to Execute the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on behalf of the County.**

Mr. Larson was present to review and discuss the consideration of Resolution #R-2026-25 of Jasper County, SC. approving an Intergovernmental Agreement with the City of Hardeeville for Workforce Training Programs for Jasper County residents and asked for the authorization of the County Administrator to be able to execute the Intergovernmental Agreement (IGA) on behalf of the County.

**Motion to approve:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman Arzillo
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

**C) Jessica Davis and Courtney Thames, Clerk of Court's Office - Consideration of Resolution #R-2026-26 a Resolution of Jasper County, South Carolina, Approving the Establishment of a Rollover Bank Account for Unencumbered Title IV-D Child Support Funds Known as Unit Cost Reimbursement Funds.**

Ms. Davis and Ms. Thames of the Clerk of Court's Office was present to review and discuss the consideration of Resolution #R-2026-26 a resolution of Jasper County, South Carolina, approving the establishment of a rollover bank account for unencumbered Title IV-D Child Support Funds known as Unit Cost Reimbursement Funds.

**Motion to table for information from the attorney:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman VanGeison
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

## 9. PUBLIC HEARINGS, ORDINANCES, AND ACTION ITEMS

**A) Lawrence Flynn and Chief Wells - Public Hearing and 2nd Reading of Ordinance #O-2026-17 Amending Chapter 9 of the Code of Ordinances of Jasper County Regarding Fire Protection Districts to Create the Jasper County Rural Fire Protection District; Eliminating all Existing Fire Protection Districts; Authorizing the Novation of all Outstanding Bonds and Other Debt Obligations to the New District; Requesting and Accepting Dedication of County-Funded Fire Capital Equipment and Facilities; Authorizing a Fire Service Contract Between the New District and The City Of Hardeeville; Authorizing the Lease of Certain County Real Property; Authorizing the Conveyance of Certain Personal Property; and Other Matters Relating Thereto.**

**Chairman Rowell recused himself from this item Vice Chairman Arzillo chaired the meeting during this item.**

Mr. Flynn and staff were present to review and discuss the 2nd Reading of Ordinance #O-2026-17 for the amending of Chapter 9 of the Code of Ordinances of Jasper County Regarding Fire Protection Districts to create the Jasper County Rural Fire Protection District. They discussed the reasoning behind the request; the need for this proposal; the elimination of all existing fire protection districts; authorizing the novation of all outstanding bonds and other debt obligations to the New District; requesting and accepting dedication of county-funded fire capital equipment and facilities; authorizing a fire service contract between the New District and the City of Hardeeville; authorizing the lease of certain county real property; authorizing the conveyance of certain personal property; and other matters relating thereto. For further information on this item please refer to the recorded version online at our YouTube Channel video at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBmloqX05cKAsHm_ggXCJlA.
The public hearing was opened for this item, but there were no comments, so the public hearing was closed.

**Motion to approve O-2026-17 and amend to include the Levy Road Fire Station:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman VanGeison
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

The Vice Chairman then turned the meeting back over to Chairman Rowell.

**B) Jessica Davis and Courtney Thames, Clerk of Courts Office – Consideration of the Request to Approve the Purchase of two X-ray Machines—one for the Courthouse and one for the Administrative Building—for a total of two machines, to be funded from this new line item.**

**Motion to table till the next meeting:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman Ceccarelli

**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

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**10. Administrator's Report:** Mr. Fulghum reviewed the information from his report that was provided in the agenda e-packet.

Ms. Burgess noted that the JC250 Committee had made a request for additional funds noting this was for the 250th Anniversary. The request from the JC 250 Committee for funds in the amount of $26,700.00 were discussed noting it was for the Thomas Heyward location.
**Motion to approve $26,700 from the Local Hospitality Tax Fund for the JC250 Committee:** Councilman Ceccarelli
**Second:** Councilman Kemp
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed.

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**11. Councilmember Comments and Discussion:** Councilmember Comments were given but there were no comments that required action. Councilmember Ceccarelli read a statement regarding Mr. Fulghum noting his 22 years of service and his retirement as of 05.04.2026. He mentioned Mr. Fulghum's knowledge, and navigation of the political waters for over two decades, showing perseverance and adaptability. He noted that Mr. Fulghum was the go-to person from everything coming out of this and prior councils. He noted that he had never heard Mr. Fulghum brag or boast of his accomplishments but had often heard other representatives of other government agencies or private groups speak of such. Councilman Ceccarelli then thanked him for all his years of dedicated service to Jasper County.

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**12. Adjournment:**

**Motion to adjourn:** Councilman Kemp
**Second:** Councilman Arzillo
**Vote:** Unanimous
The motion passed, and the meeting adjourned.

For more information on this meeting please go to our YouTube Channel for the video. During meetings and / or workshops periods of review, discussion, presentation, comments, and other sections the minutes are typically condensed and paraphrased. The recorded version is available online at our YouTube Channel video at https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBmloqX05cKAsHm_ggXCJIA.

Respectfully Submitted:

Wanda Giles, Clerk to Council

W.J. Rowell III, Chairman of the Jasper County Council