



CITY OF HARDEEVILLE AND JASPER COUNTY COUNCIL

SPECIAL JOING WORKSHOP

**Location: Hardeeville Recreation Center
285 John Smith Road, Hardeeville, SC. 29927**

Thursday, July 10, 2025

Minutes

Jasper County Officials Present: Chairman John Kemp, Vice Chairman Joey Rowell, and Councilman Joe Arzillo, County Administrator Mr. Fulghum and County Staff.

City of Hardeeville Officials Present: Mayor Harry Williams, Councilmember White, Councilmember Carroll, Councilmember Guzman and Councilmember Meersman and City Staff

1. Call to Order of the City of Hardeeville and Jasper County Council Joint Workshop:

Mayor Harry Williams of the City of Hardeeville welcomed everyone to the meeting of Thursday, July 10, 2025, for the Joint Workshop with the City of Hardeeville and Jasper County being held at 285 John Smith Road, Hardeeville, SC. 29927.

Workshop Rules of Order: The meeting operated under reduced rules of order, allowing anyone to speak whenever they had something to say, provided the previous speaker had yielded the floor. Recognition by the Chair he noted, was not required to speak. Mayor Willams expressed hope that the meeting marked the beginning of a new day in Jasper County, where councils could come together regularly to discuss common challenges, goals, and solutions. The Chair stressed the importance of cooperation, communication, and respect, even when disagreeing. The opening remarks concluded with a quote from the movie *Casablanca*: "I think this is the beginning of a beautiful friendship".

Jasper County Presentation:

a. Comprehensive Plan, Transitional Areas, Growth Strategy for Future Land Use

The presentation was introduced by Administrator Andy Fulghum. The presenter for the Jasper County presentation was Ms. Lisa Wagner, Director of Planning and Building Services for Jasper County. Ms. Wagner reviewed information for the presentation at this workshop. The following information was presented:

Comprehensive Plan Summary (Jasper's Journey):

- The plan was updated in 2018.
- **Community Principles included:** protecting and fostering the rural character of Jasper County; stewardship of historic, natural, and cultural resources; reducing litter and blight; supporting economic development (jobs, education, training); prioritizing maintenance of existing infrastructure; and embracing collaboration with governmental and non-governmental organizations.
- The plan guides growth by focusing on development in places most suitable to serve new needs.

Future Land Use and Urban Transition Areas (UTAs):

- The Future Land Use Map highlighted urban transition areas (the darker yellow areas), which are unincorporated pockets partially or entirely surrounded by the municipality.
- **Policy Recommendation:** For new development, redevelopment, and rezonings within UTAs, the county recommends working with the adjacent municipality for annexation.
- **Recent Update Focus (2023–2024):** A five-year update focused on land use and community facilities, including reviewing land use regulations for the U-Haul Broad River Planning Area (which was under a moratorium).
- **Future Goal:** The county intends to develop a special area plan for the Levy area.

3. Discussion on Annexation, Growth, and Duplication of Services

The County promotes annexation by recommending that any party seeking rezoning, new development, or redevelopment in a UTA speak with the City of Hardyville's planning staff.

Topics of Concern:

- It is "imperative" to work closely to improve service delivery and prevent the existence of "donut holes" (pockets of county territory surrounded by the city).
- Duplication of services is expensive and inefficient. Current "donut holes" are significant, sometimes involving 200 and 300 homes.
- Confusion exists regarding boundaries for service delivery.

Policy Recommendations for Policy Makers (Councils):

- Policy makers need to develop clear policies regarding annexation, "donut holes," and shared services.
- It was suggested that one way to stop unwanted development outside the city is by maintaining the current zoning (e.g., Rural Preservation), preventing development that would require upzoning.
- Past practices in Jasper County sometimes utilized Rural Preservation as a "placeholder" zone to define an area but limit development until an annexation request was made.
- The County Administrator indicated a willingness to strengthen current policy and focus on unincorporated properties within the City's defined growth boundary. Staff may work on tightening transitional zoning and developing safeguards at the administrative level.
- A key suggestion was to eliminate "zone shopping" (where developers decline annexation to avoid city taxes) by requiring joint meetings of both councils to make decisions on annexation requests.

City of Hardeeville Presentation

a. Annexation and Growth Boundary Policy

The presenter for this presentation for the City of Hardeeville was Mr. Matt Davis. Mr. Davis reviewed information for the presentation at this workshop. The following information was presented:

Policy Background:

- Hardeeville adopted its growth and annexation policy in 2021, following its Comprehensive Plan adopted in July 2019.
- The policy seeks to avoid duplication of services, protect economic and environmental areas, and encourage cooperation.
- The growth boundary is defined as a "do not go beyond line," not a "develop to line," meaning areas within the boundary may never be annexed.

Growth Boundary and Annexation Status:

- The boundary is generally defined by the BJWSA canal (North), Highway 170 (East), the New River and 315 (West), and the Savannah Wildlife Refuge/US 17 (South).
- Since 2021, Hardeeville has annexed approximately 31 acres in total, with the Karrh Tract being the largest (about 80% of the total). Two annexations are currently under consideration.

Annexation Law (South Carolina):

- South Carolina state law allows only voluntary annexation. A property owner must make the request, typically via one of three methods (e.g., 100% owner petition or petition for portions).
- Legislation allowing municipalities or counties to involuntarily annex "donut holes" has not passed.

5. Next Steps: Developing Joint Policy on Annexation

Council discussed the path forward for creating a joint policy.

Agreed Actions and Next Steps:

1. **Staff Collaboration:** Staff (Hardeeville and Jasper County) will immediately collaborate on current annexation requests and development issues which abut the city. Staff will work on strategies to tighten transitional zoning and policy safeguards.
2. **Joint Resolution:** The crucial first step is to draft and pass a Joint Resolution between Hardeeville and Jasper County, mirroring each other's language to ensure unity.
3. **Inclusion of Ridgeland:** Ridgeland should be invited to participate in the joint resolution process to establish a county-wide growth plan.
4. **Policy Development:** Staff should construct the resolution, incorporating input from both councils regarding necessary details, before bringing the resolution back for debate and passage.
5. **Utility Coordination:** Future joint policy meetings should include utility providers to ensure infrastructure readiness and appropriate timelines.

Discussion of Shared Emergency Services

The discussion focused on the best, most economical, and most efficient way to deliver emergency services. It was agreed that this is a critical topic, given that Jasper County is the fastest-growing county in the nation.

The scope was broadened from fire and EMS to include **all first responders**, specifically law enforcement (police and sheriff's office).

Proposed Process (Staff Data vs. Consultant):

- Council consensus shifted toward utilizing in-house expertise first.
- It was agreed that relying on department heads (Chiefs) to compile data first would be faster and more cost-effective than immediately hiring an expensive consultant.
- The department heads are the experts and know the needs of their services. A consultant might be needed later to analyze the collected data or mediate rough spots.

Required Actions for Department Heads:

- The Chiefs of all three entities (Hardyville, Jasper County, and Ridgeland) will be asked to meet.
- They should produce a joint report detailing areas of current cooperation (e.g., mutual aid) and areas for improvement, including discrepancies between urban and rural fire response.
- **Data Requirement:** The report should provide a "static picture" of current operations, including call volumes, types of calls, and spatial mapping of call volumes (hotspots). This data will help determine the best service delivery model and how shared services will "mesh" with demand.
- **Data Timeline:** The chiefs were directed to study call data covering a two-year time frame (Calendar Years 2023 and 2024), considering the rapid recent growth.

Next Step Timeline:

- The Chiefs are to meet for the first time within 30 days.
- They are to report back to their respective councils with a framework/report within 60 days.

Closing Remarks and Adjournment


Council members from both entities expressed optimism regarding the new era of collaboration.

Motion to Adjourn: A motion was made to adjourn and was seconded.

Vote: All in favor said "I," and the motion passed. The meeting was adjourned.

For more information on this meeting please go to our YouTube Channel for the video go to https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCBmloqX05cKAsHm_ggXCJIA . There are also Closed Captions available for all of our County Council videos. Just click the "CC" button to follow along.

Respectfully submitted:



Wanda H. Giles
Clerk to Council



John A. Kemp
Chairman

Minutes – 07.10.2025