

MINUTES  
UNION COUNTY COUNCIL MEETING  
TUESDAY, SEPTEMBER 8, 2020 AT 5:30 P.M.  
MEETING ROOM AT 103 W. MAIN STREET, UNION, SC 29379  
STREAM TO FRANK HART UNION COUNTY SUPERVISOR  
FACEBOOK PAGE

Present: Chairman Frank Hart, Vice-Chairman Ben Ivey, Councilman David Sinclair, Councilman Tommie Hill, Councilwoman Kacie Petrie, Sammy Diamaduros and Clerk to Council Linda G. Jolly

Absent: Councilwoman Tracie Campbell and Councilman Ralph Tucker

Notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda giving the date, time and place of the meeting was posted on the bulletin board in the hall of the Union County Courthouse and a copy was mailed or emailed to the members of the Union County Council, the County Attorney, Jeff Fellers with Clemson Extension, Jami Trammell with Chamber of Commerce, Mr. Mickey Gist, Mr. Robert Small, Mr. James Kollock, Mrs. Casie Jolly, Mike Stevens at WBCU Radio Station, Graham Williams at the County News, Charles Warner at the Union Times, the News Room at the Spartanburg Herald Journal, Chris Lavender with the Spartanburg Herald Journal, Shell Suber at MHISC, and Michael Lee with MHISC as well as to elected officials and heads of various county departments and offices. A notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda were also posted on the County's website.

Chairman Frank Hart called the meeting to order.

Council Chaplin David Sinclair gave the invocation followed by the Pledge of Allegiance.

The Clerk to Council gave the Roll Call with the following results:

Tracie Campbell, District 1 – Absent

Ralph Tucker, District 2 – Absent

David Sinclair, District 3 - Present

Ben Ivey, District 4 - Present

Tommie Hill, District 5 - Present

Kacie Petrie, District 6 – Present

Kacie Petrie: Made a motion to dispense with reading of the minutes of the regular monthly meeting of the Union County Council held on August 11, 2020, the special meeting of County Council held on August 27, 2020 and to adopt the minutes as written.

David Sinclair: Seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Chairman Frank Hart presented a service award certificate and gift certificate to Nadie Gault for 35 years, to Lorene Bevis for 30 years and for Casey Barefoot for 5 years of dedicated service to Union County.

Chairman Frank Hart stated next on the agenda was to consider appointments to boards and commissions. There is a vacancy on the Board of Appeals due to a term expiration. There are

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two vacancies on the Building Code Board of Appeals as a member had passed away and there is a vacancy for an alternate. There is a vacancy on the Board for Phillipi Fire District due to the resignation of Carrol Alexander, Jr. Chairman Frank Hart asked if any councilmember had any recommendations for appointments but there were none.

Chairman Frank Hart said next on the agenda was William “Kyle” Brannon to discuss a mandate of masks and the tax reduction on airplanes but he was not present at the meeting.

John McKnight who serves on the Airport Commission said he wanted to explain why they recommended the County taxes on aircraft in Union County be reduced from 10½% to 4%. All the counties surrounding Union County have lower taxes on aircrafts. The Union County Airport is a \$17 million asset to Union County. The construction and improvements at the airport were done with 90% of the funds from the Federal level, 5% from the State level and 5% from the County. He said there are 20 hangars at the airport that are rented for \$150 a month. The Airport Commission recommends the hangars rented for aircraft that do not pay taxes on their aircraft in Union County be increased by \$50 a month effective January 1<sup>st</sup>. Those paying the 10½% rate in Union County paid \$5,369 and would pay \$2,045 at the 4% rate. County Auditor Brad Valentine stated State Tax Laws require the owner of an aircraft to register their aircraft if it is in an individual’s name based on their primary residence. Businesses who own the aircraft have a choice on where it is registered. Half the loss in revenue from the lower tax rate affects the school tax. He said the other surrounding counties are paying the 4% tax rate. There were 9 owners that paid their aircraft taxes in Union County and 11 owners that paid their aircraft taxes elsewhere. Airport Manager Ronnie Wade stated Southside Fire District should be considered since they provide fire service for the airport. Chairman Frank Hart stated that even though Council had previously made a motion to proceed with reducing the tax rate on aircraft he had not done so because of the recent controversy.

Ben Ivey: Made a motion to move forward with reducing the County tax rate on aircraft from 10½% to 4% and to raise the rental rate on some of the hangars as recommended by the Airport Commission.

Kacie Petrie: Seconded the motion. There was some discussion on providing some funding for Southside Fire District, the County’s ability to change the tax rate on aircraft since it is allowed by State Law but is not allowed on boats and campers, and raising the rental amount on hangars. The vote on the motion was unanimous.

Chairman Frank Hart stated next on the agenda was Lee Brannon to discuss a Burn Ordinance and Fire Service Fee Ordinance. He said Mr. Brannon was under the weather but he hoped to make his presentation at the next meeting.

Chairman Frank Hart recognized William “Kyle” Brannon who had arrived for the meeting to see if he wished to make any comments. Mr. Brannon said Council had already voted on reducing the tax on aircrafts so there was no point.

Chairman Frank Hart called for any elected officials or department heads who wished to address Council.

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County Auditor Brad Valentine stated they hope to have the tax levy set so they can get the tax notices mailed the first week of October.

Finance Director Ann Boggs said she was working to get the audit underway.

Delinquent Tax Collector Lorene Bevis said they were working on posting late notices and they have had an influx of payments during the last couple of weeks.

Airport and Stadium Manager Ronnie Wade stated the Department of Corrections was going to hold a job fair at the stadium on October 12<sup>th</sup>.

EMS Director Eric Harold stated they are working to fill some openings and add to their part-time roster. He said they hosted with DHEC and the South Carolina National Guard a free COVID-19 test site. They are working on the specs to advertise for their new truck that was allocated in the new budget. He informed Council that Union County was awarded an AFG grant in the amount of \$240,000 for a new ambulance.

Community Development Director Katherine Pendergrass said she needed to correct some things misquoted about her. She said she graduated with a four-year degree in English and hoped that those that talk about her or print something about her would get it straight. She said she establishes relationships, networks, talks to people and works to try to solve problems by addressing issues and working together. She holds a monthly HR meeting and a monthly partners meeting. She works with Opportunity Workforce Training and healthcare. She provided Council with a copy of the proposed Comprehensive Plan and asked them to review it for any changes during the next week. After that she plans to post it online for review and input. On the 26<sup>th</sup> of September they will hold South Carolina Counts dealing with the Census which will be held at the fairgrounds.

Tourism Director Curtiss Hunter provided Council with a list of ongoing projects they are working on. Tourism is a big business and COVID-19 has taken a toll on the tourism industry. Two thirds of Union County are composed of National Forest land. She said the list of projects was not a complete list as the equestrian project needs to be added. Chairman Frank Hart said they would set up a meeting of the Council committee dealing with recreation to discuss the proposed projects.

Linda Mitchell as the new director for 911 stated they had received some applications and were going through the interview process to fill some job vacancies.

Chairman Frank Hart presented for third and final reading an ordinance to acknowledge and authorize the execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement between Union County and the City of Union for the provision of a County Magistrate to act as Municipal Judge for the City of Union: and other matters related thereto.

Ben Ivey: Made a motion to adopt the ordinance to acknowledge and authorize the execution of an Intergovernmental Agreement between Union County and the City of Union for the provision of a County Magistrate to act as Municipal Judge for the City of Union: and other matters related thereto.

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David Sinclair: Seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

Chairman Frank Hart gave his Supervisor's Report and said he wanted to clarify something William "Kyle" Brannon had put on his podcast that was not correct. On the broadcast pertaining to football and the town, Mr. Brannon stated when the County took over dispatch we have to pay for that salary, pay for utilities, pay for the equipment and it is no longer a State tax but rather a local tax. Chairman Frank Hart stated 911 has always been funded by County tax dollars. We receive a little money from the State but it in no way pays for the Communications Department. It has always been appropriated by the County Council and will continue to be. It is not a State agency covered by State dollars which is a false statement. It would be foolish to take over a State agency that is being funded by the State. It was also reported during that show that the County cancelled Halloween on Main which was false. Each organization decides what they want to do. He suggested Mr. Brannon contact his Council representative or any member of Council if he has a question or contact him directly. On August 13<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Brannon suggested shutting down the airport as it provides no profit and we should sell it. Chairman Frank Hart said that was shortsighted and as Union County grows and brings businesses you need corporate jets to be able to come in. Not having the airport would handicap us as we compete against different counties. On August 8<sup>th</sup>, Mr. Brannon stated the City and County are putting massive amounts of money in USC-Union and there will never be a return. Chairman Frank Hart said that was a shortsighted view of where Union County is going. With the little bit of support and incentive provided by the County, that University is a major economic driver for downtown Union. You can't say it offers no return when it provides our children an education locally and research shows if you train locally then they tend to stay local. That is an investment that will pay dividends for this County. He said he had a good meeting with the President of Spartanburg Community College and the School District Superintendent and felt good about working with them moving forward. There are some discussions between Spartanburg Community College about the School District about offering an early college program which would allow students to earn a two-year degree before they graduate high school. They are looking at an applied science for mechatronics and welding which would support our local industry. He talked to them about forming an Educational Task Force to include the Dean of USC-Union and the local campus director or someone from Spartanburg Community College as well as the School District to look at strategically what we are doing on education in Union and how we can improve, better engage the kids, improve the graduation rate, and provide secondary training. He said he wants to form a Public Safety Task Force to include the County Sheriff, City Police Chiefs from Union and the Town of Jonesville as well as representatives from 911, EMS and fire services where they would meet once a month as an advisory committee. They would share information and talk about what is working well and what is not, how to improve things and work collaboratively.

Chairman Frank Hart called for any committee reports but there were none.

David Sinclair: Made a motion to go into executive session to discuss a legal and personnel matter.

Kacie Petrie: Seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

The Union County Council went into executive session to discuss a legal and personnel matter.

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Chairman Frank Hart stated they were ready to close executive session and no votes were taken during executive session.

David Sinclair: Made a motion to close executive session.

Tommie Hill: Seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous

The County Council closed executive session and returned to regular session.

Chairman Frank Hart called for any other business but there was none.

David Sinclair: Made a motion to adjourn the meeting.

Tommie Hill: Seconded the motion. The vote was unanimous.

The meeting was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Frank Hart, Chairman  
Union County Council

Linda G. Jolly, Clerk to Council