

**BARNWELL COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**April 10, 2018**  
**Special Called Council Meeting Minutes**

**Pursuant to the Freedom of Information Act, the news media was notified & notice was posted 24 hours prior to the meeting.**

Barnwell County Council met for a Special Called Council meeting on April 10, 2018 at 4 pm. Attending were Chairman Lowell Jowers Sr., Vice Chairman Ben Kinlaw, Councilman Harold Buckmon, Councilman Jerry Creech, Councilman Don Harper, Councilman Freddie Houston Sr., Councilman David Kenner, Administrator Tim Bennett and Clerk to Council Kim Futrell. County Attorney JD Mosteller was unable to attend. Laura McKenzie with the People Sentinel was also in attendance.

The meeting was called to order and a quorum was declared. Chairman Jowers said the meeting could be held in Open Session. Councilman Creech moved to approve the agenda with it being amended to exclude the Executive Session. Councilman Buckmon seconded the motion and it passed.

Administrator Bennett said his goal was to attend all County related committee/board meetings and after doing so, determine which meetings he would need to attend on a continual basis. He said he had already attended meetings for the Recreation Committee, the Transportation Committee and the Airport Board and planned to continue attending. He said touring each Council member's districts had been very helpful. He had spent time working on the budget and 96 percent of the budget requests were in. There would be a 1<sup>st</sup> reading of the budget ordinance at the 6 pm Council meeting that night. He said Pickens Williams Jr., Debbie Fickling, Kim Futrell and other Departments had been very helpful in assisting him with the budget. He would be working with the Finance Committee and planned to schedule a budget meeting within the next few weeks. Also, he had spent time working on personnel issues. He planned to focus on financial sustainability and accountability, economic development, developing good roads, buildings and grounds. He planned to outline how he intended to reach those goals and to include in that, the goals Council relayed to him at this meeting.

Vice Chairman Kinlaw said he was seriously concerned that Executive Session items were becoming public knowledge. He did not know what Council could do to address this issue. He said Council needed to support Administrator Bennett and give him the resources he needed to do his job.

Councilman Harper said there seemed to be a lack of discipline in different Departments throughout the County and that supervisors were not disciplining or holding accountable employees who had destroyed equipment.

Councilman Houston said in his experience, throughout years of service on various Boards confidential information rarely stayed within the Board and was usually leaked by the Board members. He said he would like to have a Council Retreat so that Council could focus on what their roles were as Council members. He said it was not Council's job to become personally involved in trying to fix employee and Department issues, but to refer those issues to Administrator Bennett. He said he would like to see Council become more cohesive, acting as a whole and not as individuals, to work for the betterment of the County. He said the Administrator represented the County and not any one Council member individually but all seven Council members.

Councilman Creech said he believed Administrator Bennett had the support of all 7 Council members and was pleased with his performance. He said it was Administrator Bennett's job to keep Council informed. Councilman Creech said one of his major concerns was how Barnwell County was being treated by SRS, especially since Barnwell County's property was the most affected. He said he didn't know if the Administrator or Chair needed to go to Washington but that something needed to change. Councilman Creech also said he believed each Department Head needed a back up employee trained to do the Department Head's job in case there was an emergency. Councilman Creech said he was concerned and dismayed concerning the damage he had seen done on some of the County's heavy equipment.

Councilman Buckmon said he was concerned about Executive Session items being leaked and that it had been going on for years. He said he was pleased with the quick actions Administrator Bennett had taken and on his keeping Council informed. Councilman Buckmon said Administrator Bennett had complete authority to take whatever action that was necessary and that it was Council's role to be a support group for him. He said it was important that Council follow the chain of command and that if an employee had an issue, Council should direct the employee to Administrator Bennett and not become personally involved.

Councilman Kenner said in the past things had been brought straight to Council, but that Council needed to work through the Administrator. Regarding his expectations of Administrator Bennett, Councilman Kenner said he had shared those during the interview process. Councilman Kenner said he was also concerned regarding the treatment from SRS as much of Barnwell County had been stripped away. Councilman Kenner said he would like to see more communication between all of Council and that when members took upon themselves to act individually, it had led to dilemmas. He said

the citizens wanted better from Council and that Council needed to strive in working better together because the citizens deserved it. He said he would like for Council to have a Retreat.

Chairman Jowers said that Council needed to stop micromanaging the County and that there was a chain of command that needed to be followed. He said it was Council's job to evaluate the Administrator, the Administrator's job to evaluate Department Heads and that Council did not need to know when someone received a raise. He said Council needed to be proactive and to work together.

Council discussed how much information regarding employee disciplinary measures and terminations Council needed to be advised of. Some of the concerns were that confidential information would get out and also that if an employee filed a grievance, Council's prior knowledge might influence their decisions should the matter come before them. Council discussed not being advised of employee disciplinary measures and in the case of termination, only being advised of the termination and not the specific individual or the circumstances leading to the termination.

Council discussed networking with SRS and Aiken County, traveling to Washington, etc. and other actions Council could take to bring focus on Barnwell County in regard to the amount of land the County lost, the environmental impact and dangers, and the comparatively small amount of money being received from the DOE as compensation.

Council Houston and Vice Chairman Kinlaw discussed the challenges going into the budget process and the need for decisions involving financial matters to be presented to the Finance Committee so they could be included in the budget process.

Administrator Bennett said he believed Department Heads needed to be held accountable for their Departments. He said he thought there was a need for training in personnel management, personnel evaluations, sexual harassment, sexual discrimination and also to focus on and continue to develop teamwork among the staff.

A motion was made to adjourn. The motion was seconded and it passed.

The meeting adjourned at 5:29 pm.

  
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Kim A. Futrell, Clerk to Council



  
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Charles Lowell Jowers Sr., Council Chairman