

COMMITTEE OF COUNCIL AS A WHOLE REPORT

Council Members:

Roy Costner, Chairman
Wes Hendricks, Vice Chairman Pro-Tem
Carl Hudson
Trey Whitehurst
Ensley Feemster
Chris Bowers, Vice Chairman (absent)

Staff in Attendance:

Ken Roper, Acting County Administrator
Meagan Bradford, Clerk to Council

The Committee of the Whole met in the Main Conference Room, at the Pickens County Administration Facility, on Monday, September 16, 2019 at 6:00 PM. All members of the committee were in attendance, with the exception of Vice Chairman Chris Bowers, with Chairman Roy Costner presiding.

WELCOME AND CALL TO ORDER:

Chairman Roy Costner called the Committee of the Whole meeting to order. Councilman Carl Hudson led the invocation and Pledge of Allegiance.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE:

Chairman Roy Costner stated we will begin with Executive Session to discuss the pending board applications.

EXECUTIVE SESSION: S.C. Code of Laws, Section 30-4-70 (a): Boards and Commissions – Section 30-4-70 (a) (1)

- Pending Board Applications

Chairman Roy Costner called for a motion to convene into Executive Session as defined by S.C. Code of Laws, Section 30-4-70 (a).

- Motion was made by Councilman Ensley Feemster, seconded by Councilman Carl Hudson and carried unanimously (6-0), to convene in executive session for the stated purposes.

ACTION AS NEEDED VIA EXECUTIVE SESSION ITEMS:

- Vice Chairman Chris Bowers called the Public Session back to Order and advised the following:
 - Chairman Roy Costner made a motion to recommend the following citizens to serve on the Pickens County Performing Arts Center Non-Profit Corporation Board:
 - a) ***Pickens County Performing Arts Center Non-Profit Corporation Board – *Moved to appoint Justin Ray Williams, Chad Hope, Terry Garrison, and Carrie Tidwell to the Pickens County Performing Arts Center Non-Profit Corporation Board.***
 - Motion was seconded by Councilman Ensley Feemster and carried unanimously (5-0).

Solar Farm Ordinances – Log No. 132

- Mr. Roper informed Council that we have not had first reading on this ordinance. He stated many of the council members will be seeing the language for the first time this evening. Mr. Roper stated there will be a public hearing with the Planning Commission on November 12. He stated we are a little out of order in the sense we would usually do first reading in title only before the public hearing, but this is a new concept

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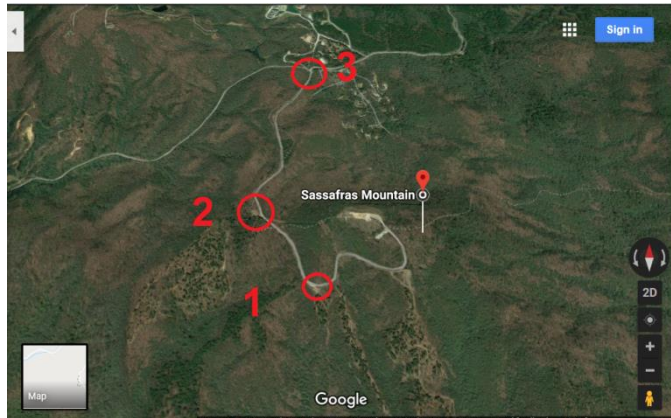
for Council and staff came up with language for Council to look at. He stated that Chris Brink, Director of Community Development, is here with us tonight to discuss the Solar Farms with Council.

- Mr. Brink had detailed discussion on Chapter 12 of the proposed Solar Farm section in the Pickens County UDSO to include, but not limited to: Solar Farm Ordinances in Jasper, Darlington and Jasper Counties; Sec. 1203(a) Land use permits- #20 Renewable Energy Systems – Solar Farms; Sec. 315(a) – Renewable Energy Systems – Solar Farms Definitions; 315(b) Use Standards – Size and Location; 315(b)(2) Setbacks and Buffers; 315(c) Application Materials; 315(d) – Decommissioning; 315(e) – Site Restoration/Stabilization.
- Councilman Trey Whitehurst asked if this was going on private property.
- Mr. Brink stated yes.
- Councilman Whitehurst stated when we say we are applying as a county; we are asking the property owner to bring the site back to what it was. He asked if we are requiring them to have a bond with the owner of the property. He stated that we have stuff written in the UDSO that if it were the County's property, but this is mostly going to be on private property.
- Mr. Brink stated it will, unless the company buys the property. He stated regardless, we would still require a decommission process to protect whoever.
- Councilman Whitehurst asked if this would have to go before the Planning Commission.
- Mr. Brink stated yes, when it is above 15kw, which is small.
- After more discussion, Councilman Wes Hendricks stated he had a question regarding page 3-23. He asked if it was ever discussed to do the buffer width 100 feet in the local street use.
- Mr. Brink stated it was not discussed, but he does not see a reason why we cannot raise it to 100 feet.
- Councilman Hendricks stated he has done a lot of research on this topic, and he stated he has researched a few other counties who have a solar farm ordinance. He stated a county in the lower part of the state recommended 100 feet on the local street use, and they had a successful ordinance.
- Councilman Whitehurst asked how we came up with 75 feet.
- Mr. Brink stated he took what someone else put in their solar farm buffer standards. He stated without having this interaction, there is no way for him to know.
- Councilman Hendricks stated on page 3-24, in section c, he had a question about the greenery around the fence. He asked if that includes greenery around all sides of the fence.
- Mr. Brink stated when you apply standards to a use; you can't make them comply with what changes around them. He stated it could be an instance to where today it might by one use that does not require it, but another day it might.
- Councilman Hendricks stated he feels it should have greenery all around the fence.
- After more discussion regarding buffering and screening, Mr. Roper stated he met with one of the representatives of the industry in preparation for this meeting and they do think the setbacks are excessive but he thinks the setbacks are a good idea. He stated the height of equipment at 10 feet is something they identify as a problem. He stated they want the equipment to be higher, so it is not obstructive.
- Mr. Roper stated there have been some announcements of other solar farms in other counties and a lot of these larger solar farms that are multi-million dollar investments have FILOTS attached, are happening in the lower part of the state. He stated we have not had any proposal on that scale here. He stated it is a decision that Council needs to make.
- Councilman Trey Whitehurst asked if they originally asked for a FILOT.
- Mr. Roper stated they originally did, but we weren't ready for the conversation at the time.
- Councilman Whitehurst asked if they were going to put this before the Planning Commission, and then they will talk about it and bring it back to Council.
- Chairman Costner stated yes, the Planning Commission will have a public hearing as well on November 12th.
- Seeing no other discussion, Mr. Roper stated this is the beginning of this conversation and this is new for Pickens County.
- ❖ **No Action Taken by the Committee.**

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Sassafras Mountain Overlook – Log No. 115

- Mr. Roper stated this has been on the Committee Log for a while now and he wanted to bring Council up to speed on this log number. He stated the county was involved in the project within various stages and at one point, the County was going to be the ones who maintained this facility, but we did not agree to do that. Mr. Roper presented to Council some pictures of the finished Sassafras Mountain Overlook, stating it is complete. Mr. Roper stated the only reason he wanted to keep this on the log is because there are some issues with access. Mr. Roper presented this map to Council:



- Mr. Roper stated at #3, that is an intersection with Gladly Fork Rd. and F. Van Clayton Memorial Highway. He stated there are people who live around this intersection, and there is a youth camp right by it as well. He stated the left hand side of this map is South Carolina, and the right hand side is North Carolina. He stated the elevation from #3, to #2, to #1, to the Sassafras Mountain is a pretty steep grade. Mr. Roper stated even in a car, it is a challenging climb. He stated the issue is now that the Sassafras Mountain overlook is up there; there are concerns about inclement weather. Mr. Roper stated there is an “end of state maintenance” sign on F. Van Clayton Memorial Highway, before you get to the #3 point in the picture above. He stated the State of South Carolina believes that Pickens County is responsible for the road leading up to the overlook.
- Councilman Trey Whitehurst stated the county has had this conversation with state officials before, stating this is not the county’s road. He stated they admitted it was their road, and they wanted the county to maintain it.
- Mr. Roper stated what ends up happening is during inclement weather, the county will receive calls saying county staff needs to “sand, scrape and maintain that road.” He stated the Roads and Bridges Department think it’s actually not safe for our county trucks to travel up that road in bad weather. Mr. Roper advised the state will not maintain that road, and they have an end of state maintenance sign. He stated the issue is more complicated and that road actually runs along the state line. He stated the right hand of the roads are in South Carolina, and the left hand side of the road’s in North Carolina for several hundred yards, then it comes back into South Carolina. He stated he does not know how Pickens County could ever have maintenance responsibility on a road that is located in North Carolina. Mr. Roper stated there have been ongoing conversations with the state over this issue, but we are not reaching an agreement and foul weather’s coming. Mr. Roper proposed that the county creates a fence and a gate. He stated at the point where it says “end of state maintenance”, when it is foul weather, rather than accessing that dangerous section of a road and putting county employees in danger, we close the gate. He stated it will not come back open until we have good weather. He stated he wanted Council to be aware of the issue and his proposed fix. He stated he did not want to take this step without Council knowing, and would like feedback about whether this is a good solution. Mr. Roper stated this is the solution in his mind right now because it ends the conversation, and we know we’re not going to put our citizens and our county employees at risk as they go up that highway in foul

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weather. He advised he believes it will only be closed a tenth of a percent of a year. He stated 99.9 percent of the year, it will be wide open for everyone to use and enjoy.

- Councilman Carl Hudson stated usually when it snows; citizens jump in their vehicles and go there first. He stated if state officials balk at the county putting a gate up, that solves the road responsibility question.
- Councilman Trey Whitehurst stated if it is a state road, which they acknowledge that it was and they wanted the county to maintain, then can we put a gate in front of their state road.
- Mr. Roper stated we have been providing that service every winter, every year.
- Councilman Carl Hudson stated if the state officials say that the county cannot put up the gate, then that will solve who is responsible for the road.
- Councilman Wes Hendricks stated DNR officials would like to put a gate to close off the overlook at night, to cut out chances of vandalism. He stated it is a multi-million dollar facility and it has done a lot for our area.
- Councilman Trey Whitehurst asked how much it would cost to put the gate up.
- Mr. Roper stated they have already ordered the parts.
- After more discussion, Councilman Whitehurst stated procedures needed to be established regarding closing the gate for inclement weather, to make sure no cars are behind the gate before closing.
- Mr. Roper stated we have a few weeks until we put this gate in place. He stated the gate itself will be constructed in the county's welding shop. He advised that he just wanted to put this on Council's radar.
- Chairman Costner stated he would like to develop a procedure in the future for inclement weather gate closure, when the gate is almost completed.
- Councilman Wes Hendricks asked if the county could put more signs near the outlook roads with clearer directions. Also, if there was any way to be able to type in Sassafras Mountain Overlook into maps on cell phones to give a clearer direction.
- Mr. Roper stated he will talk with the GIS Department on this.

❖ **No Action taken by the Committee.**

Tourism Plan – Log No. 74

- Chairman Costner stated he wanted Council to have a conversation on the future of a tourism plan. Chairman Costner stated to him, Tourism is a part of Economic Development and getting people to come and visit Pickens County. He stated we made great strides to get to where we are today. He stated he wanted Council to begin to talk about what we envision our tourism to be like 20 years from now. He stated we are big on property rights, and we do not have zoning. Chairman Costner asked what Council's thoughts are for tourism and what we can accomplish.
- Councilman Ensley Feemster stated we have some beautiful waterfalls, and people do not know how to get to them. He stated he feels we should have signage and ways to prevent erosion.
- Chairman Costner stated he feels Oconee County is doing a good job on what they have done recently. He stated the signage is the same throughout the cities and the county. He stated he keeps hearing from the commerce park that we have our conventions in Greenville all the time because there is no place to do one in Pickens County.
- Councilman Wes Hendricks asked if there was a brochure of Pickens County waterfalls. He stated other counties have brochures of different waterfalls in the counties.
- Jay Pitts, Tourism Director, stated he has meet with Lake Hartwell Country over the last two months. He stated his next step was to take "Your Natural Destination" and to do exactly what council is talking about. He stated he would like to partner with them and become a part of Lake Hartwell Country, which encompasses Anderson, Oconee and Pickens Counties. He stated they will do a brochure on hiking trails, waterfalls, a historic scenic site map, etc. Mr. Pitts stated they produce 30,000 of these brochures and have a mechanism where they go out to different zones in the state. He stated everything we have in Pickens County is incorporated in this brochure within the three counties. He stated the cost is minimal to get this done. Mr. Pitts stated in addition, we are a part of a

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digital marketing program, which you can go on the internet to find these things. He stated the last part of what we would do is being a part of a visitor's guide app. He stated Pickens County would have an app where everything is located throughout Pickens County.

- Councilman Trey Whitehurst stated most of the waterfalls in Pickens County are on state or federal lands. He stated we do not have the control over the development, maintaining, etc. He stated what we have control is how we advertise it. He stated our biggest resource we have is our lakes. He stated he does not feel we have utilized with what we can do with our lakes. He stated the only place he believes is a convention spot is the Madren Center in Clemson. He stated it is a very nice venue.
- Chairman Costner stated he believes we do not need to be in the business of building stuff. He stated he believes we need to be in the business of inviting people to come, meaning investors, marketing people to persuade people to come here.
- Councilman Trey Whitehurst stated we could individually get people to come here, or we can advertise to investors to build here, because that is what brings people. He stated if you attract investors, they will bring the people.
- Chairman Costner stated what if we had an expo and invited people to share ideas about Pickens County to investors, etc.
- Councilman Whitehurst stated we have an Economic Development Director, and we always target manufacturing. He stated that is what we have always done. He stated himself and Chairman Costner often travels due to work, but they choice to live in Pickens County. He stated our tourism is very new in this county, as we just hired our first tourism director a few years ago. He stated we are still figuring our way out here.
- Councilman Feemster stated he was very impressed with the hotels in Clemson. He stated he took 100 Hagood Mill brochures, and divided them between each other, and stated that all the hotels were thrilled to get the brochures.
- Councilman Trey Whitehurst stated he feels that is what the Tourism Department should be doing, not Councilman Feemster.
- Chairman Costner stated he likes Mr. Pitts idea about a Pickens County app, where you can access all information regarding Pickens County including parks, waterfalls, hiking trails, maps, etc.
- Mr. Roper stated we do have an active request from Lake Hartwell Country for this. He stated it will fit with the 30% money designation.
- Councilman Wes Hendricks stated he has heard complaints about why we do not have more brochures on the state line visitor centers. He stated some of the brochures state that Pickens County only has two waterfalls.
- After more discussion, Chairman Costner stated this company has no incentive to put anything else in those brochures because we are not giving them any money for it.
- Mr. Roper stated Council has not designated the 30% money yet. He stated it is Accommodations Tax money that has to be used for a specific purpose. He stated this is not the money that goes into the general fund that is used to fund different tourism activities within the county, and it is not the money that is sent to the ATAX Committee to be sent to different organizations. He stated this is the 30% money which specifically has to be used for a limited purpose. It has to be used for advertising and promotion of tourism to develop and increase tourism through the generation of publicity.
- Mr. Pitts stated they are working on developing digital marketing with them, and we are going to be represented on these brochures.
- Councilman Trey Whitehurst asked when this will be completed.
- Mr. Pitts stated they have asked for \$12,500 to start out.
- Councilman Whitehurst asked what the county gets for that price.
- Mr. Pitts stated we get represented on the brochures, and we get 30,000 brochures printed that go to all the different venues discussed. He stated we get 3,500 of those brochures that the County gets to do whatever they would like to do with them.
- Councilman Whitehurst asked if they currently have an app.

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- Mr. Pitts stated not yet, but that is fixing to happen. He stated he has a proposal that they are working on right now to show Council. He stated he has asked Lake Hartwell Country to come in to present to Council.
- Chairman Costner stated his goal of putting this on the agenda was to hear their voices on what they see and envision in 20 years.
- Mr. Roper stated he has a very specific deadline that he is dealing with the 30% money. He stated he recommends Council saying the money available is designated to the Tourism department for marketing purposes.
- Councilman Wes Hendricks asked if there was a need for the money somewhere else.
- Mr. Roper stated there is not another way we can use it other for marketing purposes. He stated if they designate it to the Tourism department, which is qualifying.
- Chairman Costner made a motion to move the 30% money from ATAX to specifically marketing and tourism to be determined by Council on how it will specifically be spent. Motion was seconded by Councilman Ensley Feemster. Chairman Costner asked if there was any other discussion:
 - Councilman Wes Hendricks asked if it had to be specifically used on marketing.
 - Chairman Costner stated it has to be spent on marketing tourism. He stated based on the definition, marketing is broad.
 - Mr. Roper stated the actual definition states “used only for advertising and promotion of tourism to develop an increase tourism attendance through the generation of publicity.”
 - Chairman Costner stated he would like for that to be added to the motion.
 - **Update motion:** To move the 30% money from ATAX to specifically be used only for advertising and promotion of tourism to develop an increase tourism attendance through the generation of publicity, and to be determined by Council on how it will specifically be spent.
- Seeing no other discussion, motion carried unanimously (5-0).
- ❖ Chairman Costner made a motion to move the 30% money from ATAX to specifically be used only for advertising and promotion of tourism to develop an increase tourism attendance through the generation of publicity, and to be determined by Council on how it will specifically be spent. Motion was seconded by Councilman Ensley Feemster and carried unanimously (5-0).
- Councilman Trey Whitehurst stated he would like to ask Ray Farley, Economic Development Director, to broaden his scope. He stated he would like to see large tourist companies come in to develop venues on the lake.
- Mr. Roper stated as we look at the different tools that different people have, the person that is going to develop the Economic Development plan, the marketing plan, etc. for the county is Mr. Pitts, the tourism director.
- Chairman Costner stated Dr. Voss, from Southern Wesleyan, was talking about the classes they have at SWU and they already have a group of students who would love the opportunity to work in hotel hospitality.
- Mr. Pitts stated some of the things Council has discussed tonight; he has had two meetings with business men/women who are interested in doing exactly what Council is talking about doing. He stated it will be developing in this county. He stated we would be the go between government and private enterprise, who want to come in and bring these types of venues in the county. He stated they will also be coming to Council to make presentations.
- Chairman Costner stated out of the 46 counties in SC, Pickens County is much bigger than what most people want to believe. He stated we are a growing county of opportunities and he feels we need to be thinking along these lines so that we have a plan in place. He stated he would like to think about what we want Pickens County to look like in 20 years.
- Mr. Roper stated he had a great conversation with Clemson Chamber of Commerce a couple weeks

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ago. He stated they offered stern criticism about the way we approach tourism because of the difference between the way Clemson looks at it, and the way Pickens look at it. He stated one thing they really liked was the “Your Natural Destination.”

- After more discussion, Chairman Costner stated he feels we need to have more conversations with our local chambers. He stated we have a group of business, leaders, and individuals who take part in the individual communities and he feels they can help us create those conversations.

ADJOURN:

Hearing no further Committee business, Chairman Roy Costner called for a motion to adjourn. Motion was made by Councilman Wes Hendricks, seconded by Councilman Carl Hudson and carried unanimously (5-0).